THE PROPER DISTINCTION BETWEEN LAW AND GOSPEL

DR. C. F. W. WALTHER

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TO THE FACULTY OF CONCORDIA COLLEGE
AT ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA,

THIS ENGLISH EDITION OF WALTHER'S CLASSIC,
IN RECOGNITION OF HONOR CONFERRED UPON HIM,
IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR

THE PROPER DISTINCTION

Between

LAW AND GOSPEL

Thirty-Nine Evening Lectures

by

DR. C. F. W. WALTHER

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by

W. H. T. DAU

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PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION.

The treatise which is herewith offered to the public will be found, in the last analysis, to be a searching study of the will of God as related to the will of man.

From Genesis to Revelation the Scriptures teach us that the will of God is directed towards man along two distinct lines. While the divine will itself is always one and never self-contradictory, it operates from distinct purposes and for distinct ends. But no matter how it operates, the element of man's sin is always a factor in its operations. The will of God is related to the possibility and actuality of man's sinning and exerts itself in two peculiar ways, against man's sin and all its effects, by denouncing, opposing, fighting, and destroying them.

In the first place, God has willed, is now willing, and will never cease willing, that man shall not sin. Sin is the absolute negation of that moral rule and order which God has set up for the universe that He created and in which He placed man as His foremost creature. Sin is lawlessness and constitutes the doer thereof a rebel against the righteous rule of His sovereign Lord.

God created man in His own image. That means that the original human being whom the almighty Maker of heaven and earth and all their substance fashioned from a clod of earth and made a living soul by breathing into him the breath of life, — that this original, primeval man was holy and righteous as his Creator is. He was holy because His entire being, body, soul, and spirit, with all their faculties and functions throughout man's life on earth, were consecrated solely and entirely to the service of God in whatever station the divine Ruler might place him or to whatever task He might appoint. He was righteous because his essence and actions were in perfect conformity with the will of his Maker. His human intellect, will, and affections were at no point out of harmony with the divine intellect, will, and affections. God had put the attributes of holiness and righteousness which exist in Him as His very essence into man as created gifts and as reflections of that perfection which exists in Him essentially.

God had worked into the very nature of man the rule of right — of being right and doing right. This rule has been permanently fixed in man. St. Paul says it is "written" in man's heart. Even sin does not wholly eradicate it; for the pagans, who are without a divine code of law, still do "by nature" the things contained in the code of Law which God published at a later time. Accordingly, what God is by a law of His own and in autonomous fashion, that man is to be by submitting to his divine Ruler and Potentate and in heteronomous fashion. In God, holiness and righteousness are the characteristics of the one Sublime, Sovereign Being, to whom no one can issue a command or lay down a law. In man, holiness and righteousness are concreated characteristics of an intelligent creature of God that was made dependent upon, and subaltern to, God, of a being that was never meant to be a law unto himself or the sole arbiter of his volitions, judgments, and desires, or answerable to no one for what he might choose to do.

Of this fact, that a divine norm of holiness and righteousness is implanted in him man is made aware by a faculty which his Maker created for him when He made man in His likeness. This faculty is called the conscience in man. It is the natural, instinctive ability of man to apply the divine rule of right to himself, to his moral state, at any given moment of his existence and to any action of his or to any failure to act when action is demanded of him. While the divine norm of right implanted may be compared to a code of laws, the conscience in man may be viewed as a judge who measures actions by the law and the testimony of witnesses and renders a decision, declaring a person guilty or not guilty.

Furthermore, man is made conscious by the forces of nature that he is living in a moral universe. This great, wide world and its history through nearly sixty centuries is a witness of God's sovereign rule over man and serves only for the glory of God. Its powers are spent for the benign purposes of the great Creator; its forces move in a heavenly rhythm to silent laws which He made for them. Man discovers that this world was not made to sin in; that even the laws of nature resist the effort to sin, and the brute and inanimate creatures rebel, as it were, against being pressed into service to sin. Man finds out that it is really more proper, easier, and more advantageous not to sin in a world like ours and that under existing conditions a person invariably makes life here hard for himself and others by sinning. Fully to suit sinners, the world would have to be made over again.

The divine norm of right concreated in the first human being and transferred in the course of natural propagation from him to all his descendants was afterwards published in writing in the form of "Ten Words," or commandments, and delivered by Moses to the chosen people of Israel, whom God has made the standard-bearers of the norm of righteousness in a morally decaying world, and the keepers of His oracles which from time to time He communicated to mankind through inspired writers. These Ten Words, or the Decalog, which were published more than two thousand years after the creation of Adam, formed the subject of many a discourse delivered to the followers of the true God in Old Testament times by their prophets, teachers, priests, lawyers, and scribes and in New Testament times by Jesus Christ and His apostles. The inspired records of all these deliverances is called "the Law" in Holy Scripture and in the theological literature of the Church.

The unwritten law in men's hearts and the conscience have revealed their existence in the efforts of natural man to do right, to lead an upright life, to serve his fellow-men and his country, to practise the virtue of religiousness and the domestic and civil virtues. The laws of nations, the ethical codes of society, are emanations and manifestations of the ineradicable notion of right and wrong implanted in man's heart, or of the natural Moral Law. The fearful operations of this Law are also exhibited in every device which the retributive justice of legislators and courts has set up for the punishment of wrong-doing and the protection of the good. Furthermore, the terrors of the Law are produced in every human heart under the smitings of the conscience, which rivets his guilt upon the wrong-doer. The nemesis exhibited in the old Greek drama, in Shakespeare, and in

every great drama since is nothing else than the cry of despair wrung from guilty souls by the accusing and damning conscience.

The Moral Law, in both its unwritten and written form, is made ever-enduring. No single or concerted effort of lawless spirits and men can put it out of commission. There will never be a time while this universe lasts when men will not feel the power of the Moral Law in their private and public lives; nor will the Moral Law ever lack advocates, defenders, and champions amidst the growing corruptions of the decadent world hastening to its final collapse. To the end of all things, up to the bar of the last assizes, and beyond the crack of doom the holy and righteous will of God will be asserted throughout eternity by the rightly reprobated in their endless, legally inflicted misery and by the Righteous One in heaven, who has made Himself the end of the Law to all who believe in Him.

"The end of the Law," — is Paul really justified to apply a phrase like that to an interminable matter like the divine rule of right and wrong? Yes; for God, who maintains His moral rule over men forever through the expression of His holy and righteous will in the Law, has willed, in the second place, that the breakers of His Law shall be given another chance to become righteous in His sight. The Hater of sin and sinners (Rom. 5, 10; Eph. 2, 3) is at the same time the Lover of sinners, and He has declared His good and gracious intentions to the breakers of His Law by the same serious, energetic, and complete will which has been expressed in His holy and righteous Law.

This second manifestation of the will of God for the rescue of sinners from the fatal effects of their sinning, viewed from our position in time and space, has occurred after, and in consequence of, sin's coming into the world. To us this second manifestation of the divine will looks like an afterthought, somewhat like this: After beholding the wreckage which the sinner had made of the original plan of the Creator concerning him, the Creator, instead of inflicting inexorably the condign punishment with which He had threatened the sinner, arrested Himself, as it were, in His avenging act and proposed to the sinner a way of escape from the doom of temporal corruption and eternal destruction which the sinner had merited. But this view would not be altogether correct.

To God nothing is an accident. He knows events before they occur, and He determines beforehand the limits of each happening. While in no causal relation to sin, God had foreseen in eternity its entrance into the world and in eternity had prepared those safeguards against the ravages of sin which He afterwards proclaimed in the form of compassionate, merciful, comforting promises which He made to men in their ruined condition under sin. How these two forms of the divine will can coexist in God passes our comprehension, but that they always do exist in God at the same time, God has declared throughout His written revelation. In fact, the entire Bible which He breathed into the holy writers, from Moses to John, is nothing else than a continuous account and exposition of both His holy and righteous and His good and gracious will. While the former has been called the Law, the latter has been given the endearing name of the Gospel, that is, the goodly, or godly, spell, or tale — so good that it could come only from God. The entire Scriptures, which

are chronologically divided into the Old and the New Testaments, are topically, or logically, divided into the Law and Gospel, both of these running through both Testaments.

In expounding to sinners His good and gracious will, God has stated in detail what all He purposes to do in order to help the sinner out of His sinful state. He has declared that in this divine endeavor to reclaim the sinner the entire holy Trinity is to be at work. As the manifestation of the holy and righteous will is a manifestation by the entire Deity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so the manifestation of the good and gracious will embraces an account, not only of the loving and gracious counsel of God in eternity, but also of the redeeming work perfomed by the Son of God and the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost here in time. The contents of the Gospel have been enumerated by Christians in the three articles of the Apostles' Creed, as the contents of the Law have been condensed in the Ten Commandments.

The Gospel, then, represents a profoundly thoughtful, elaborate, and orderly scheme of God to bring renegade man out of his rebel condition under sin into a state of loyalty to God under the Gospel. The sinner's rescue from his wretched condition by God's Gospel plan consists in this, that the sinner is told not only that God loves him spite of his sin, but that He so loves the sinner, who is by nature a child of wrath, as to sacrifice His own Son for him and to send the Holy Spirit into his heart to produce in him repentance over his sins and faith in the divine forgiveness of his sins. The love of God for sinners of which the Gospel speaks is not like the easy-going attitude which an indolent and indulgent parent assumes to his libertine son, when he tells him not to bother his mind about his wrongdoing and its consequences, to forget it, and to consider himself still loved by his doting sire. No; the redemptive love of God works in conjunction with the righteousness and holiness of God. These divine attributes which God expounded to man in the Law are not put out of commission by the love of God, but without destroying the sinner, as He has threatened to do, God by His redeeming love finds a way to meet the demands which God's righteousness and holiness make upon man and to execute the lawful punishment which the sinner has incurred by breaking God's Law. God sent His Son, coequal and coessential with Himself, on earth in the form of a human being. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was made man and placed under the Law that had been issued to man for the purpose of fulfilling it in man's place. Through the sinless life of Christ on earth under every condition and in every relationship which the Law of God determines for man, a treasure of righteousness has been accumulated that balances even with all the demands of the divine Law. This treasure Christ did not collect for Himself; for He was in no need of it, being both the holy and righteous God and a holy and righteous man, who never did the least wrong in thought, word, or deed. This treasure was designed by God to be given away to every sinner as his own and to be regarded by God as the sinner's righteousness. In other words, God in His love decreed that the sinner, who had lost the original righteousness in which he had been created and who had spent his life in unrighteousness, should be made righteous by proxy, *viz.*, by the foreign righteousness of the Son of God, who had

spent His earthly life under the Law as the sinner's Substitute, in the sinner's place.

Furthermore, the sinless, impeccable Christ, at the end of His sojourn among men, suffered death, which no one has to undergo except sinners; for death is the wages of sin. There is only one explanation of the death of the incarnate Son of God — it is substitutive, or vicarious, just like His life under the Law. Jesus died the death which sinners had deserved to die, and by His redeeming love, God purposes to regard the death of His Son as the death which He would have to inflict upon every sinner for breaking His Law.

The Gospel, then, embraces the entire work of Christ on earth, as the evangelical Teacher of men, as their evangelical High Priest, who makes atonement for their iniquities, and as their evangelical Regent, who sets up a new rule in their rebellious hearts by the power of His love.

By his first sinful act man had not only changed his relation to God from that of a loyal subject and loving friend to that of a mutinous rebel and hating enemy, but he had also changed his spiritual condition. The first sin was evidence that the human intellect, will, and affections no longer functioned as they had in the state of innocence; they had become blind, crooked, perverse, disorderly. Out of this changed condition other sinful acts kept springing up, and this condition was passed on from father to child by natural propagation. The blight which had fallen on the bright intellect, the strong will, and the correct desires of Adam and Eve in the fatal hour of their first disobedience was inherited by their descendants.

Fallen man no longer understood fully the will of God, no longer purposed to live according to that will, no longer desired to please God. Spite of the thundering accusations of the divine Law and his conscience against him he continued to live for his pleasures and defied God continually. But he loved to cheat himself by believing that he was complying with the Law of God, which he had grossly changed by his wanton misrepresentations. He managed to consider himself passing fair and even better in God's sight, and he suppressed the misgivings and scruples that would arise in him by reckless indifference or licentiousness or by increased hypocrisy. Of the divine Law, then, he still retained a partial knowledge, but had no inclination sincerely to live up even to his partial knowledge, and of the divine Gospel of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake he could have no knowledge, for by nature no man knew of this divine plan of salvation.

The good and gracious will of God, then, had to embrace this kindness, that, after His Son had completed His work of redemption in the sinners' place on earth, God sent His Holy Spirit to men by means of His Word. The Holy Spirit was to lead men to a true knowledge of their wretched and hopeless condition as lawbreakers and lead them to genuine spiritual sorrow over their sins, crush their natural conceit and stubbornness, and make them contrite. Next He was to make them understand the wonderful kindness of God in sending His Son to be their Savior; He was to make them accept by an act of faith the work of Christ as performed in their place, and then teach them to lead holy and righteous lives

from gratitude to God and after the pattern of Christ's life, until God would advance them after a life of progressive sanctification to be coheirs of Christ in everlasting glory.

Since God confronts man at all times both by His holy and righteous and by His good and gracious will, He wants him to understand clearly at any moment of his life on earth what his relation to God is when measured by either will. This is a task easy enough to grasp intellectually, but quite difficult to carry out amid the vicissitudes of a life in a world steeped in wickedness and with a body ever prone to sin. The task is to keep the Law and the Gospel of God strictly apart, using either for the better understanding of the other, but never mingling the teaching of the one into that of the other.

Dr. Walther's treatise on this subject has been reproduced in this volume. It is one of the most searching disquisitions of the vitals of a truly Christian life. The reader will find in this treatise amazing insights opened up for him into his own inner life and that of other Christians and his fellow-men in general.

A word regarding the origin of this treatise and its English edition.

The treatise is a posthumous product of the great Lutheran theologian. Walther was dead ten years when this treatise was first published. The manuscript of the treatise had been built up out of stenographic transcripts made by a student who was listening to these lectures, which began Friday, September 12, 1884, and terminated Friday, November 6, 1885. Next to Walther's lectures on the Inspiration of the Bible this series of lectures is the most extensive and exhaustive series of lectures that Walther attempted in those gatherings on Friday evening during the scholastic year, when he loved to assemble the entire student-body of Concordia Seminary and visiting clergymen and laymen around his desk and talk to them in a more or less informal manner on some doctrinal subject. It appears that in the introductory remarks, at the opening of each lecture, Walther followed a manuscript or copious notes; but for the lecture itself he had, as a rule, a mere outline to guide him in his discourse.

There is no doubt in the translator's mind that Rev. Th. Claus, whose stenographic reports of the lectures were used for the German edition in 1897, has correctly reported Dr. Walther, even to a fault. Dr. L. Fuerbringer, who acted as censor of the German edition and had compared the manuscript of Rev. Claus with his own notes, was likewise correct in seeing to it that the lecture form of this treatise and therewith a good deal of the historical setting amid which the lectures were delivered was preserved. A former listener of Walther can easily reproduce to his mind the events that happened in the *Baier-Lehrsaal* on South Jefferson Avenue Friday after Friday. Persons who never heard Walther can get a fair idea from these lectures how he addressed his students and handled the topics.

A speaker, especially an *ex-tempore* speaker, is not under the same restraints before his audience as an author before the reading public. Moreover, a greater freedom, even a certain *abandon,* is quite acceptable when an old, beloved professor is talking to an audience made up almost

entirely of his students. While Walther always strove to be very precise, very correct, and very decorous in his personal behavior and speech, these lectures are evidence that he was human and could enjoy the *nonchalance* of familiar intercourse.

A speaker can accomplish something by a gesture, a pose, a modulation of the voice, a pause, a change of the tempo of his address, which an author cannot achieve at all in his lifeless print or but inadequately by illustrations. The translator heard this series of lectures, except those between New Year and Easter 1885. In reading the German edition, which has been built up from the transcript of a classmate, the translator has in a number of places felt that right here a picture of the speaker would be of considerable help.

It is a great question with the translator whether Dr. Walther, if he had lived, would have permitted the publication of the German treatise just in that form. At any rate, the translator, while striving heroically to preserve in his English reproduction every detail of the German original has found it impossible to follow the German print, for instance, in its treatment of citations which Walther introduced in his lectures and usually broke up by a multitude of side-remarks. The German print inflicts an unnecessary hardship on the reader by the form in which these citations with the intercalations have been printed, purely for the sake of historical accuracy. In the English reproduction the form of the German edition has not always been followed, but the citation has been given entire, and the intercalations have been given after the citation. In one instance where it seems the bell rang for the close of the lecture, a citation has been cut in two, the second half being given after the introduction of the next lecture. In the English edition this citation has been given entire in the lecture in which it was introduced. A number of inaccuracies in the German original have been removed in this English edition which, while striving to retain all of the charm and flavor of the German of Dr. Walther, is not a slavish and labored verbatim translation, but a reproduction in the English idiom. Every one who has ever attempted work of this kind knows that very often compound German clauses have to be recast, and German adverbial connectives at times require a circumlocution in English.

May this treatise work for the upbuilding of genuine Christian lives in its English readers as it did for its German readers and to the listeners of Dr. Walther's matchless discourses! W. H. T. Dau.

Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Ind.,
Thanksgiving Day, 1928.

LAW AND GOSPEL.

Thesis I.

The doctrinal contents of the entire Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and the New Testament, are made up of two doctrines differing fundamentally from each other, viz., the Law and the Gospel.

Thesis II.

Only he is an orthodox teacher who not only presents all the articles of faith in accordance with Scripture, but also rightly distinguishes from each other the Law and the Gospel.

Thesis III.

Rightly distinguishing the Law and the Gospel is the most difficult and the highest art of Christians in general and of theologians in particular. It is taught only by the Holy Spirit in the school of experience.

Thesis IV.

The true knowledge of the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is not only a glorious light, affording the correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures, but without this knowledge Scripture is and remains a sealed book.

Thesis V.

The first manner of confounding Law and Gospel is the one most easily recognized — and the grossest. It is adopted, for instance, by Papists, Socinians, and Rationalists and consists in this, that Christ is represented as a new Moses, or Lawgiver, and the Gospel turned into a doctrine of meritorious works, while at the same time those who teach that the Gospel is the message of the free grace of God in Christ are condemned and anathematized, as is done by the papists.

Thesis VI.

In the second place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Law is not preached in its full sternness and the Gospel not in its full sweetness, when, on the contrary, Gospel elements are mingled with the Law and Law elements with the Gospel.

Thesis VII.

In the third place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Gospel is preached first and then the Law; sanctification first and then justification; faith first and then repentance; good works first and then grace.

Thesis VIII.

In the fourth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Law is preached to those who are already in terror on account of their sins, or the Gospel to those who live securely in their sins.

Thesis IX.

In the fifth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when sinners who have been struck down and terrified by the Law are directed, not to the Word and the Sacraments, but to their own prayers and wrestlings with God in order that they may win their way into a state of grace; in other words, when they are told to keep on praying and struggling until they feel that God has received them into grace.

Thesis X.

In the sixth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the preacher describes faith in a manner as if the mere inert acceptance of truths, even while a person is living in mortal sins, renders that person righteous in the sight of God and saves him; or as if faith makes a person righteous and saves him for the reason that it produces in him love and reformation of his mode of living.

Thesis XI.

In the seventh place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when there is a disposition to offer the comfort of the Gospel only to those who have been made contrite by the Law, not from fear of the wrath and punishment of God, but from love of God.

Thesis XII.

In the eighth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the preacher represents contrition alongside of faith as a cause of the forgiveness of sin.

Thesis XIII.

In the ninth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when one makes an appeal to believe in a manner as if a person could make himself believe or at least help towards that end, instead of preaching faith into a person's heart by laying the Gospel promises before him.

Thesis XIV.

In the tenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when faith is required as a condition of justification and salvation, as if a person were righteous in the sight of God and saved, not only by faith, but also on account of his faith, for the sake of his faith, and in view of his faith.

Thesis XV.

In the eleventh place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Gospel is turned into a preaching of repentance.

Thesis XVI.

In the twelfth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the preacher tries to make people believe that they are truly converted as soon as they have become rid of certain vices and engage in certain works of piety and virtuous practises.

Thesis XVII.

In the thirteenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when a description is given of faith, both as regards its strength and the consciousness and productiveness of it, that does not fit all believers at all times.

Thesis XVIII.

In the fourteenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the universal corruption of mankind is described in such a manner as to create the impression that even true believers are still under the spell of ruling sins and are sinning purposely.

Thesis XIX.

In the fifteenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the preacher speaks of certain sins as if they were not of a damnable, but of a venial nature.

Thesis XX.

In the sixteenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when a person's salvation is made to depend on his association with the visible orthodox Church and when salvation is denied to every person who errs in any article of faith.

Thesis XXI.

In the seventeenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when men are taught that the Sacraments produce salutary effects ex opere operato, that is, by the mere outward performance of a sacramental act.

Thesis XXII.

In the eighteenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when a false distinction is made between a person's being awakened and his being converted; moreover, when a person's inability to believe is mistaken for his not being permitted to believe.

Thesis XXIII.

In the nineteenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when an attempt is made by means of the demands or the threats or the promises of the Law to induce the unregenerate to put away their sins and engage in good works and thus become godly; on the other hand, when an endeavor is made, by means of the commands of the Law rather than by the admonitions of the Gospel, to urge the regenerate to do good.

Thesis XXIV.

In the twentieth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the unforgiven sin against the Holy Ghost is described in a manner as if it could not be forgiven because of its magnitude.

Thesis XXV.

In the twenty-first place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the person teaching it does not allow the Gospel to have a general predominance in his teaching.

FIRST EVENING LECTURE.

(September 12, 1884.)

My Dear Friends: —

If you are to become efficient teachers in our churches and schools, it is a matter of indispensable necessity that you have a most minute knowledge of all doctrines of the Christian revelation. However, having achieved such knowledge, you have not yet attained all that is needed. What is needed over and above your knowledge of the doctrines is that you know how to apply them correctly. You must not only have a clear apperception of the doctrines in your intellect, but all of them must have entered deeply into your heart and there manifested their divine, heavenly power. All these doctrines must have become so precious, so valuable, so dear to you, that you cannot but profess with a glowing heart in the words of Paul: "We believe, therefore we have spoken," and in the words of all the apostles: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." You have indeed not seen these things with your physical eyes or heard them with your physical ears, like the apostles, but you ought to have an experience of them through your spiritual eyes and ears.

While in my dogmatic lectures I aim to ground you in every doctrine and make you certain of it, I have designed these evening lectures on Fridays for making you really practical theologians. I wish to talk the Christian doctrine into your very hearts, enabling you in your future calling to come forward as living witnesses with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. I do not want you to stand in your pulpits like lifeless statues, but to speak with confidence and with cheerful courage offer help where help is needed.

Now, of all doctrines the foremost and most important is the doctrine of justification. However, immediately following upon it, as second in importance, is this, *how Law and Gospel are to be divided*. The distinction between the Law and the Gospel shall now claim our attention and form the subject of our earnest study.

True, Luther says that he is willing to place him who is well versed in the art of dividing the Law from the Gospel at the head of all and call him a doctor of Holy Writ. But I would not have you believe that I intend to place myself ahead of everybody else and be regarded as a doctor of the Sacred Scriptures. That would be a great mistake. I admit that people sometimes call me a doctor of theology; but for myself I rather wish to remain a humble disciple and sit at the feet of our Dr. Luther, to learn this doctrine

from him even as he learned it from the apostles and prophets. As often as you attend these lectures, I want you to come breathing a silent prayer in your hearts that God may grant us His Holy Spirit abundantly: you, to the end that you may profitably hear; me, to the end that I may teach effectively. Let us, then, take up our task with firm confidence that God will bless both our own souls and the souls of those whom we are to rescue.

Comparing Holy Scripture with other writings, we observe that no book is apparently so full of contradictions as the Bible, and that, not only in minor points, but in the principal matter, in the doctrine how we may come to God and be saved. In one place the Bible offers forgiveness to all sinners; in another place forgiveness of sins is withheld from all sinners. In one passage a free offer of life everlasting is made to all men; in another, men are directed to do something themselves towards being saved. This riddle is solved when we reflect that there are in the Scriptures two entirely different doctrines, the doctrine of the Law and the doctrine of the Gospel.

Thesis I.

The doctrinal contents of the entire Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and the New Testament, are made up of two doctrines differing fundamentally from each other, viz., the Law and the Gospel.

It is not my intention to give a systematic treatment of the doctrine of the Law and the Gospel in these lectures. My aim is rather to show you how easy it is to work a great damage upon your hearers by confounding Law and Gospel spite of their fundamental difference and thus to frustrate the aim of both doctrines. You will not begin to be interested in this point until you place before yourselves in clear outlines the points in which the Law and the Gospel differ.

The point of difference between the Law and the Gospel is not this, that the Gospel is a divine and the Law a human doctrine, resting on the reason of man. Not at all; whatever of either doctrine is contained in the Scriptures is the Word of the living God Himself.

Nor is this the difference, that only the Gospel is necessary, not the Law, as if the latter were a mere addition that could be dispensed with in a strait. No, both are equally necessary. Without the Law the Gospel is not understood; without the Gospel the Law benefits us nothing.

Nor can this naive, yet quite current, distinction be admitted, that the Law is the teaching of the Old while the Gospel is the teaching of the New Testament. By no means; there are Gospel contents in the Old and Law contents in the New Testament. Moreover, in the New Testament the Lord has broken the seal of the Law by purging it from Jewish ordinances.

Nor do the Law and the Gospel differ as regards their final aim, as though the Gospel aimed at men's salvation, the Law at men's condemnation. No, both have for their final aim man's salvation; only the Law, ever since the Fall, cannot lead us to salvation; it can only prepare us for the Gospel. Furthermore, it is through the Gospel that we obtain the ability to fulfil the Law to a certain extent.

Nor can we establish a difference by claiming that the Law and the Gospel contradict each other. There are no contradictions in Scripture. Each is distinct from the other, but both are in the most perfect harmony with one another.

Finally, the difference is not this, that only one of these doctrines is meant for Christians. Even for the Christian the Law still retains its significance. Indeed, when a person ceases to employ either of these two doctrines, he is no longer a true Christian.

The true points of difference between the Law and the Gospel are the following: —

1. These two doctrines differ as regards the *manner of* their *being revealed* to man;

2. As regards their *contents;*

3. As regards the *promises* held out by either doctrine;

4. As regards their *threatenings;*

5. As regards the *function* and the *effect* of either doctrine;

6. As regards the *persons* to whom either the one or the other doctrine must be preached.

All other differences can be grouped under one of these six heads.

Now let us have the Scripture proof for what I have said.

In the first place, then, Law and Gospel differ as regards *the manner of their being revealed to man.* Man was created with the Law written in his heart. True, in consequence of the Fall this script in the heart has become quite dulled, but it has not been utterly wiped out. The Law may be preached to the most ungodly person, and his conscience will tell him, That is true. But when the Gospel is preached to him, his conscience does not tell him

the same. The preaching of the Gospel rather makes him angry. The worst slave of vice admits that he ought to do what is written in the Law. Why is this? Because the Law is written in his heart. The situation is different when the Gospel is preached. The Gospel reveals and proclaims nothing but free acts of divine grace; and these are not at all self-evident. What God has done according to the Gospel He was not obliged to do, as though He could not possibly have remained a just and loving God if He had not done it. God would still have been eternal Love if He had allowed all men to go to perdition.

Rom. 2, 14. 15 we read: *When the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.* Here we have the apostle's testimony that even the blind pagans bear the Moral Law with them in their heart and conscience. No supernatural revelation was needed to inform them concerning the Moral Law. The Ten Commandments were published only for the purpose of bringing out in bold outline the dulled script of the original Law written in men's hearts.

On the other hand, we have from the same apostle, and in the same epistle, this statement concerning the Gospel, Rom. 16, 25. 26: *To him that is of power to stablish you according to my Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.* In clear terms the apostle here testifies that it was impossible, since the beginning of the world, to discover the Gospel. It became known only through an act of the Holy Spirit, who inspired men to write its message.

Try and realize this important distinction. All religions contain portions of the Law. Some of the heathen, by their knowledge of the Law, have advanced so far that they have even perceived the necessity of an inner cleansing of the soul, a purification of the thoughts and desires. But of the Gospel not a particle is found anywhere except in the Christian religion.

Had the Law not been written in men's hearts, no one would listen to the preaching of the Law. Everybody would turn away from it and say: "That is too cruel; nobody can keep command-

ments such as these." But, my friends, do not hesitate to preach the Law. People may revile it, yet they do so only with their mouths. What you say when preaching the Law to people is something that their own conscience is preaching to them every day. Nor could we convert any person by preaching the Gospel to him unless we preached the Law to him first. It would be impossible to convert any one if the Law had not been written in men's hearts. Of course, God could save all men by a mere act of His will. But He has not *revealed* to us that He intends to do so, and the definite order of salvation which He has appointed for us does not indicate any intention of this kind.

The second point of difference between the Law and the Gospel is shown by the *contents* of either. The Law tells us what we are to do. No such instruction is contained in the Gospel. On the contrary, the Gospel reveals to us only what God is doing. The Law is speaking concerning our works; the Gospel, concerning the great works of God. In the Law we hear the tenfold summons, "Thou shalt." Beyond that the Law has nothing to say to us. The Gospel, on the other hand, makes no demands whatever.

But does not the Gospel demand faith? Yes; that, however, is just the same kind of command as when you say to a hungry person, "Come, sit down at my table and eat." The hungry person will not reply: "Bosh! I will not take orders from you." No, he will understand and accept your words as a kind invitation. That is what the Gospel is — a kind invitation to partake of heavenly blessings.

Gal. 3, 12 we read: *The Law is not of faith; but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.* This is an exceedingly important passage. The Law has nothing to say about forgiveness, about grace. The Law does not say: "If you are contrite, if you begin to make amends, the remainder of your trespasses will be forgiven." Not a word of this is found in the Law. The Law issues only commands and demands. The Gospel, on the other hand, only makes offers. It means, not to take anything, but only to give.

Accordingly we read, John 1, 17: *The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* What a momentous statement this is: The Gospel contains nothing but grace and truth! When reading the Law, pondering it, and measuring our conduct against its teaching, we are terrified by the multitude of demands which it makes upon us. If nothing else were told us, we should be hurled into despair — we should be lost. God be praised! there is still another doctrine, the Gospel. To that we cling.

Law and Gospel differ, in the third place, by reason of their *promises*. What the Law promises is just as great a boon as what the Gospel promises, namely, everlasting life and salvation. But at this point we are confronted with a mighty difference: All promises of the Law are made on certain conditions, namely, on the condition that we fulfil the Law perfectly. Accordingly, the promises of the Law are the more disheartening, the greater they are. The Law offers us food, but does not hand it down to us where we can reach it. It offers us salvation in about the same manner as refreshments were offered to Tantalus in the hell of the pagan Greeks. It says to us indeed: "I will quench the thirst of your soul and appease your hunger." But it is not able to accomplish this because it always adds: "All this you shall have if you do what I command."

Over and against this note the lovely, sweet, and comforting language of the Gospel. It promises us the grace of God and salvation without any condition whatsoever. It is a promise of free grace. It asks nothing of us but this, "Take what I give, and you have it." That is not a condition, but a kind invitation.

Through Moses, God says, Lev. 18, 5: *Ye shall keep My statutes and My judgments; which, if a man do, he shall live in them.* This means that only the person who keeps the Law, and no one else, shall be saved by the Law.

Luke 10, 26ff. Christ meets the question of the self-righteous scribe with the counter-question: *What is written in the Law? How readest thou?* The scribe answers correctly: *Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.* And now Christ says to him: *This do, and thou shalt live.* The Lord, on this occasion, testified that, if salvation is to come by way of the Law, only he who fulfils the Law can obtain it. (By the way, we are not to think that to those who do the will of God, salvation must come as a reward of their merit. By no means; their salvation, too, would be owing to the goodness of God.) But to return to our discussion, the aforementioned condition which is attached to the Law hurls us into despair.

On a certain occasion, when the Lord wished to instruct the disciples as to what they must preach, He said: *Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.* Mark 16, 15. 16. This shows that no condition whatever is attached to the Gospel; it is a promise of grace.

Furthermore, we read Rom. 3, 22—24: *There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* Again, Eph. 2, 8. 9: *By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.* Unconditional promises of grace and salvation — that is what we find in the Gospel. Verily, a precious difference! When the Law has laid us low, we can cheerfully raise our heads again because besides the Law we have another doctrine which proposes to us no demands of any kind. Were we to ask Christ, "What is expected of me in order that I may be saved?" He would answer: "No works; I have done all the works that had to be done. You need not drink one drop of the cup that I had to drink."

A person entering fully into the meaning of this fact must be moved to leap for very joy that these glad tidings have been brought to him. A person who in spite of this message continues to be despondent and muses: "I am an abominable man; there is no forgiveness for me," does nothing less than reject the Gospel — reject Christ. Though I had committed the grossest sins and had to say with Paul, "I am the chief of sinners"; though I had committed the sin of Judas or the sin of Cain, nevertheless I am to accept the Gospel because it demands nothing of us.

The fourth difference between the Law and the Gospel relates to *threats*. The Gospel contains no threats at all, but only words of consolation. Wherever in Scripture you come across a threat, you may be assured that that passage belongs in the Law. He would indeed be a blessed person who could fully realize this comforting truth. The Holy Spirit produces this knowledge wherever it exists. Without the Holy Ghost this knowledge cannot be attained. Every person remains an unbeliever unless the Holy Ghost works this knowledge in him.

However, we are not to imagine that the Gospel makes men secure because it has no threats to hurl at men. On the contrary, the Gospel removes from believers the desire to sin.

The Law, on the other hand, is nothing but threats. As Abraham sent Hagar away into the desert with a loaf of bread and a jug of water, so the Law hands us a piece of bread and then thrusts us into a desert.

Deut. 27, 26 God says through Moses: *Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.* Indeed, man is invited by the Law to

pronounce a curse upon himself. Only a person engulfed by infernal darkness can believe that the Law will give him no trouble.

The Gospel proceeds in an entirely different fashion. Paul says, 1 Tim. 1, 15: *This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.* Hence even the foremost among sinners is not made to hear threats, but only the sweetest promise.

Luke 4, 16—21 we have this record: *He* [Jesus] *came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as His custom was, He went into the synagog on the Sabbath-day and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagog were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.* On this occasion the Lord announced the contents of His doctrine, or of the Gospel. He meant to say: "I am not come to bring a new Law, but to proclaim the Gospel." Happy the man who realizes this fact! May God help us all to attain to this knowledge!

SECOND EVENING LECTURE.

(September 19, 1884.)

My Friends: —

A person may pretend to be a Christian while in reality he is not. As long as he is in this condition, he is quite content with his knowledge of the mere outlines of the Christian doctrines. Everything beyond that, he says, is for pastors and theologians. To perceive as clearly as possible everything that God has revealed, that is something in which a non-Christian has no interest. However, the moment a person becomes a Christian, there arises in him a keen desire for the doctrine of Christ. Even the most uncultured peasant who is still unconverted is suddenly roused in the moment of his conversion and begins to reflect on God and heaven, salva-

tion and damnation, etc. He becomes occupied with the highest problems of human life.

An instance of this kind is afforded by those Jews who flocked to Christ and also by the apostles. Those multitudes heard Christ with great joy and were astonished because He preached with authority and not as did the scribes. But the majority of these hearers never advanced beyond a certain feeling of delight and admiration. The apostles, too, were uneducated people, but they acted differently. They did not stop where the rest stopped, but propounded all manner of questions to Christ. After hearing one of His parables, they said: "Declare unto us the parable." Matt. 13, 36. Similar to this was the conduct of the Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily. Acts 17, 11. It is, therefore, quite true what the *Apology* says: "Men of good conscience are crying for the truth and proper instruction from the Word of God. Even death is not as bitter to them as when they find themselves in doubt regarding this matter or that. Accordingly, they must seek where they can find instruction." (Mueller, p. 191; *Triglot Concordia,* p. 290.)

Striving to obtain the truth and divine assurance is a necessary criterion already of an ordinary Christian, in a still higher degree, however, in the case of a theologian. A theologian who has not the greatest interest in the Christian doctrines is unthinkable. Even where there is but the beginning of faith in the heart, a person regards no point of doctrine as trifling, and every doctrine is to him as precious as gold, silver, and rubies. God grant that this may be your case! If it is, you will not come surfeited into these lectures, but will ask again and again, "What is truth?" — not in the spirit of Pilate, but of Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet and listened raptly to every word He spoke. Then, too, every one of these lectures will be of great blessing to you, even though the instrument through which the truth is to be conveyed to you is inferior.

Now, the first matter that you are to consider is the points of difference between these two doctrines, the Law and the Gospel. We have heard that there are six points of difference, four of which we have reviewed. Let us pass on to the fifth point.

The fifth point of difference between the Law and the Gospel concerns the *effects* of these two doctrines. What is the effect of the preaching of the Law? It is threefold. In the first place, the Law tells us what to do, but does not enable us to comply with

its commands; it rather causes us to become more unwilling to keep the Law. True, some treat the Law as if it were a rule in arithmetic. However, let the Law once force its way into a person's heart, and that heart will strain with all its force against God. The person will become furious at God for asking such impossible things of him. Yea, he will curse God in his heart. He would slay God if he could. He would thrust God from His throne if that were possible. The effect of preaching the Law, then, is to increase the lust for sinning.

In the second place, the Law uncovers to man his sins, but offers him no help to get out of them and thus hurls man into despair.

In the third place, the Law does indeed produce contrition. It conjures up the terrors of hell, of death, of the wrath of God. But it has not a drop of comfort to offer the sinner. If no additional teaching, besides the Law, is applied to man, he must despair, die, and perish in his sins. Ever since the Fall the Law can produce no other effects in man. Let us ponder this well.

That this is so we can see from Rom. 7, 7—9, where Paul relates his personal experience under the Law thus: *I had not known lust except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the Law sin was dead. . . . But when the commandment came, sin revived.*

No heathen knows that even evil lust in the heart is sin. The greatest moralists have said: "It is not my fault that I sin; I cannot help it; I cannot prevent myself from sinning." But the Law shouts: "Thou shalt not covet! Thou shalt not lust!" Yea, we are told that we must be free even from inherited lust.

While a person gives no thought to the Law, sin goes in and out at his heart, and he is not conscious of sinning. Ask a worldly person about this matter, and he will be surprised and say: "I have done no evil. I have slain no one; I have not committed adultery; I have not been a thief"; etc. He is not noticing at all that sin is a constant guest with him. But when the Law strikes him like a bolt of lightning, he perceives how great a sinner he is, what horribly ungodly thoughts he is cherishing. That is what the apostle means when he says, "Sin revived," when the Law came. The Law uncovers sin, but offers us no comfort. If we had the Law only — as we have it now — and nothing besides, we should

have to perish forever and go to hell. The smiting effects and the curse of the divine Law will first be felt in hell; for the Law must be fulfilled; it must preserve its divine authority.

Take 2 Cor. 3, 6, where we read: *The letter killeth.* The apostle calls the Law "the letter" because God has inscribed it in the form of letters upon tables of stone. Even pagans have observed that the Law produces an effect opposite to that which it commands. The statement of the profligate poet Ovid is well known: *Nitimur in vetitum, semper cupimusque negata* ("We strive after the forbidden thing and always lust after those things which are denied us"). Ovid himself was a swine, and he says bluntly: "See, this is how I do: I always do those things which others regard as forbidden."

When the Israelites, at Mount Sinai, were given the Ten Commandments, they were all a-tremble. Their natural behavior revealed the condition of their hearts. On that occasion God wanted to point out to us for all time to come: Behold, that is the effect of the Law! Accordingly, when the rich young man came to Christ, asking how he might be saved, and was so utterly blind that he did not at all perceive his sinful corruption, we are told: *He went away sorrowful.* Matt. 19, 22. Christ could not yet apply the Gospel to this young man; He first had to convince him that he was utterly incapable of fulfilling the Law. Again, when Paul preached to Felix, the governor, concerning righteousness, temperance, and the Judgment to come, we read that *Felix trembled and answered, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."* Acts 24, 25. But he never called for Paul again; he wanted to be rid of the thunder and lightning of the Law. Again, when Peter on the first Christian festival of Pentecost had preached the Law to his hearers, we are told that *they were pricked in their hearts and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* namely, to be saved. Then Peter said to them: *Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

The effects of the Gospel are of an entirely different nature. They consist in this, that, in the first place, the Gospel, when demanding faith, offers and gives us faith in that very demand. When we preach to people: Do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God gives them faith through our preaching. We preach faith, and any person not wilfully resisting obtains faith. It is, indeed,

not the mere physical sound of the spoken Word that produces this effect, but the contents of the Word.

The second effect of the Gospel is that it does not at all reprove the sinner, but takes all terror, all fear, all anguish, from him and fills him with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. At the return of the prodigal the father does not with a single word refer to his horrible, abominable conduct. He says nothing, nothing whatever, about it, but falls upon the prodigal's neck, kisses him, and prepares a splendid feast for him. That is a glorious parable exhibiting to us the effect of the Gospel. It removes all unrest and fills us with a blessed, heavenly peace.

In the third place, the Gospel does not require anything good that man must furnish: not a good heart, not a good disposition, no improvement of his condition, no godliness, no love either of God or men. It issues no orders, but it changes man. It plants love into his heart and makes him capable of all good works. It demands nothing, but it gives all. Should not this fact make us leap for joy?

These effects of the Gospel are exhibited to us Acts 16, in the case of the jailer of Philippi. He asked Paul and Silas: *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* and received this answer: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.* The jailer does not say to the apostles: How am I to go at this? No; he promptly believes, for the apostles' words have spoken faith into his heart. The story concerning him goes on immediately: *He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.* Observe that the Gospel bestows the faith which it demands. In the demand for faith there is nothing of the nature of the Law; it is a demand of love.

Rom. 1, 16 Paul says: *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.* Here we have a record of something glorious. Can there be anything more glorious, more beautiful, more blessed, more precious, than what the Gospel gives — eternal salvation?

Eph. 2, 8—10 we have a brief description of the Gospel as seen in its effects. The apostle says: *By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* The Gospel does not say: You must do good works, but it fashions me into a human being,

into a creature of such a kind as cannot but serve God and his fellow-man. Verily, a precious effect!

To the renegade Galatians, Paul appeals in Gal. 3, 2, saying: *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the Law or by the hearing of faith?* Of course, they had to answer: "It was through the preaching of faith which we heard that we were given a new heart; for prior to that we could do no good. We have been made over into new creatures." You do not have to tell the sun to shine, and it would be just as useless to say to one of these new creatures: You must do this or that.

Finally, there is a sixth point of difference between the Law and the Gospel: it relates to the *persons* to whom either doctrine is to be preached. In other words, there is a difference in the subjects to whom they must be applied. The persons on whom either doctrine is to operate, and the end for which it is to operate, are utterly different. The Law is to be preached to secure sinners and the Gospel to alarmed sinners. In other respects both doctrines must indeed be preached, but at this point the question is: Which are the persons to whom the Law must be preached rather than the Gospel? and *vice versa.*

1 Tim. 1, 8—10 Paul writes: *We know that the Law is good if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.* To all persons of this description, then, the Law *only* is to be preached, and they are not to have a drop of Gospel. As long as a person is at ease in his sins, as long as he is unwilling to quit some particular sin, so long only the Law, which curses and condemns him, is to be preached to him. However, the moment he becomes frightened at his condition, the Gospel is to be promptly administered to him; for from that moment on he no longer can be classified with secure sinners. Accordingly, while the devil holds you in a *single* sin, you are not yet a proper subject for the Gospel to operate upon; only the Law must be preached to you.

A prophetic utterance of our Lord prior to His incarnation was cited by Him afterwards in the days of His flesh. Luke 4, 16—21. It is found Is. 61, 1—3: *The Spirit of the Lord God is*

upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. The "day of vengeance of our God" in this test is the judgment which God is to execute upon hell and the devil. Can there be a more glorious message than this? The devil has horribly disfigured the human race and hurled men into deep distress. Christ has avenged this. He has proclaimed to the devil: "I have conquered thee, and men, created after the image of God, shall not be lost. I have procured salvation for them." Only those perish who absolutely refuse to be saved; for God coerces no one in this matter.

Now, to such poor, sad-hearted sinners — I repeat it — not a word of the Law must be preached. Woe to the preacher who would continue to preach the Law to a famished sinner! On the contrary, to such a person the preacher must say: "Do but come! There is still room! No matter how great a sinner you are, there is still room for you. Even if you were a Judas or a Cain, there is still room. Oh, do, do come to Jesus!" Persons of this kind are proper subjects on whom the Gospel is to operate.

Let me now cite to you a passage from Luther's *Sermon on the Distinction between the Law and the Gospel.* He writes (St. L. Ed. IX, 802 f.): "By the term 'Law' nothing else is to be understood than a word of God that is a command, that enjoins upon us what we are to do and what we are to shun, that requires from us some work of obedience. This is easily understood when we look only at the form of speech in which God expresses a certain word of His (*in causa formali*), but it is very difficult in the execution (*in causa finali*). Now, there are many kinds of laws or commandments that refer to works which God requires of each person individually, according to his natural disposition, his standing in society, his office, and according to the particular season and other circumstances that have a bearing on the doing of such works. Hence the commandments tell each man what tasks God has laid on him, and what He requires of him, agreeably to his natural disposition and his office. For instance, a wife must tend her children and let the master of the house do the governing, etc. That is the task

required of her. A servant is to obey his master and do all other things which it behooves a servant to do. In like manner a maid-servant has a law to govern her conduct. However, the universal law that pertains to all of us is this, Matt. 22, 39: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'; give him advice and aid in any emergency; if he is hungry, feed him; if he is naked, clothe him, and so on. This is properly delimiting the Law and sequestering it from the Gospel. Law is to be called, and to be, anything that refers to what we are to do. On the other hand, the Gospel, or the Creed, is any doctrine or word of God which does not require works from us and does not command us to do something, but bids us simply accept as a gift the gracious forgiveness of our sins and everlasting bliss offered us. In accepting these gifts, we surely are not doing anything; we merely receive, we merely suffer to be given to us, what is given and presented to us by means of the Word, as when God gives you a promise like this: I make thee a present of this or that, etc. For instance, in Holy Baptism, which I have not ordained and which is not my work, but the word and work of God, He says to me: Come hither; I baptize thee and wash thee from all thy sins. Accept this gift, and it shall be thine. Now, when you are thus baptized, what else do you do than receive and accept a gracious gift?

"The difference, then, between the Law and the Gospel is this: The Law makes demands of things that we are to do; it insists on works that we are to perform in the service of God and our fellow-men. In the Gospel, however, we are summoned to a distribution of rich alms which we are to receive and take: the loving-kindness of God and eternal salvation. Here is an easy way of illustrating the difference between the two: In offering us help and salvation as a gift and donation of God, the Gospel bids us hold the sack open and have something given us. The Law, however, gives nothing, but only takes and demands things from us. Now, these two, giving and taking, are surely far apart. For when something is given me, I am not doing anything towards that: I only receive and take; I have something given me. Again, when in my profession I carry out commands, likewise when I advise and assist my fellow-man, I receive nothing, but give to another whom I am serving. Thus the Law and the Gospel are distinguished as to their formal statements (*in causa formali*): the one promises, the other commands. The Gospel gives and bids us take; the Law demands and says, This you are to do."

We note that Luther does not develop this doctrine in scientific fashion, but he proclaims it like a prophet. That is why he made such a great impression. If he had written a scientific treatise in Latin on this subject with systematic divisions and subdivisions marked A, a, α, ℵ, b, α, ℵ, c, α, ℵ, B, a, etc., the people would have marveled and said, "That man is a great scholar," but he would not by this method have made the impression which he did make.

In the writings of the Church Fathers we find hardly anything concerning the distinction between the Law and the Gospel.

THIRD EVENING LECTURE.

(September 26, 1884.)

My Friends: —

Christ Himself has described the way to heaven as a narrow path. Just so narrow is the path of the pure doctrine. For the pure doctrine is nothing else than the doctrine regarding the way to heaven. It is easy to lose your way when it is narrow, rarely traveled, and leads through a dense forest. Without intending to do so and without being aware of it, you may make a wrong turn to the right or left. It is equally easy to lose the narrow way of the pure doctrine, which likewise is traveled by few people and leads through a dense forest of erroneous teachings. You may land either in the bog of fanaticism or in the abyss of rationalism. This is no jest. False doctrine is poison to the soul. An entire banqueting party drinking from cups containing an admixture of arsenic can drink physical death from its cups. So an entire audience can invite spiritual and eternal death by listening to a sermon that contains an admixture of the poison of false doctrine. A person can be deprived of his soul's salvation by a single false comfort or a single false reproof administered to him. This is all the more easy because we are all naturally more accessible to the shining and dazzling light of human reason than to the divine truth. For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them." 1 Cor. 2, 14.

From what has been said you can gather how foolish it is, yea, what an awful delusion has taken hold upon so many men's minds who ridicule the pure doctrine and say to us: "Ah, do cease clamoring, Pure doctrine! Pure doctrine! That can only land you

in dead orthodoxism. Pay more attention to pure life, and you will raise a growth of genuine Christianity." That is exactly like saying to a farmer: "Do not worry forever about good seed; worry about good fruits." Is not a farmer properly concerned about good fruit when he is solicitous about getting good seed? Just so a concern about pure doctrine is the proper concern about genuine Christianity and a sincere Christian life. False doctrine is noxious seed, sown by the enemy to produce a progeny of wickedness. The pure doctrine is wheat-seed; from it spring the children of the Kingdom, who even in the present life belong in the kingdom of Jesus Christ and in the life to come will be received into the Kingdom of Glory. May God even now implant in your hearts a great fear, yea, a real abhorrence, of false doctrine! May He graciously give you a holy desire for the pure, saving truth, revealed by God Himself! That is the chief end which these evening lectures are to serve.

We shall now proceed with our study. Even to-night we cannot take leave of our thesis at once. We have indeed observed the points of difference between the Law and the Gospel. By hearing two testimonies of Luther on the subject we have also been strengthened in our conviction that what we have heard about these differences is true. Now I must give you a practical exhibition of the manner in which these two doctrines must be proclaimed without mingling the one with the other. To this end let me submit a passage from Luther's exposition of chapters 6, 7, and 8 of the Gospel of St. John, written in the years 1530 to 1532. —

There is a general tendency among young people to value the beautiful language and style of an author more than the contents of his writings. That is a dangerous tendency. You must always have a greater regard for the matter (*quid?*) than the manner (*quomodo?*) of a treatise. —

The Law must be preached in all its severity, but the hearers must get this impression: This sermon will help those still secure in their sins towards their salvation. Whenever the Gospel is preached, this is the impression that the hearers are to receive: This sermon applies only to those who have been smitten by the Law and are in need of comfort.

On the words of Christ, John 7, 37: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink," Luther offers this comment: "These are the two subjects on which we preach. The Law produces thirst; it leads the hearer to hell and slays him. The Gospel, however, refreshes him and leads him to heaven."

Luther speaks of this difference not only when explaining passages in which the terms *Law* and *Gospel* occur, but wherever he has an opportunity to preach these "two subjects." "The Law tells us what we are to do and charges us with not having done it, no matter how holy we are. Thus the Law makes me uncertain; it chases me about and thus makes me thirsty."

Now, when Christ invites those who thirst, He means such as have been crushed under the hammer-blows of the Law. Directly Christ invites only these to come to Him; indirectly, indeed, He invites all men. A person thus thirsting is not to do anything but drink, that is, receive the consolations of the Gospel. When a person is really thirsty and is handed but a small glass of water, how greatly refreshed he feels. But when a person is not thirsty, you may fill one glass of water after the other for him, and it will do him no good; it will not refresh him.

Luther proceeds: "The Law says: 'Thou shalt not kill.' Its whole urging is directed towards what I am to do. It says: Thou shalt love God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not commit adultery, not swear, and not steal. And then it speaks out thus: See that you have lived or are now living according to what I command you to do. When you have reached this point, you will find that you do not love God with your whole heart as you should, and you will be forced to confess: O my God, I have not done what I should; I have not kept the Law, for neither did I love Thee from my heart to-day, nor will I do so to-morrow. I make the same confession year after year, *viz.*, that I have failed to do this or that. There seems to be no end to this confessing of my trespasses. When will there be an end of this? When shall I find rest unto my soul and be fully assured of divine grace? You will ever be in doubt; to-morrow you will repeat your confession of to-day; the general confession will always apply to you. Now, where will your conscience find rest and a foothold because you assuredly know how God is disposed towards you? Your heart cannot tell you, even though you may be doing good works to the limit of your ability. For the Law remains in force with its injunction: Thou shalt love God and man with your whole heart. You say: I am not doing it. The Law replies: You must do it. Thus the Law puts me in anguish; I have to become thirsty, feel a terror, tremble, and exclaim: How am I to act in order that God may lift up His gracious countenance upon me? I am to obtain the grace of God, but on condition that I *keep* the Ten Commandments, that I have good works and many merits to show. But that

will never happen. I am not keeping the Ten Commandments, therefore no grace is extended to me. The result is that man can find no rest trusting in his good works. He would be glad to have a good conscience. He yearns for a good, cheerful, peaceful conscience and for real comfort. He thirsts for contentment. That is the thirst of which Jesus speaks. It lasts until Christ comes and asks: Would you like to be at ease? Would you like to have rest and a good conscience? I advise you to come to Me. Dismiss Moses and no longer think of your own works. Distinguish between Me and Moses. From Moses you have the thirst which you are suffering. He has done his part for you; he has discharged his office to you; he has put you in anguish and made you thirsty. Now try Me; come to Me; believe in Me; listen to *My* teaching. I am a different Teacher: I will give you to drink and refresh you."

A person who has not been put through this experience is a sound without meaning (*sine mente sonans*), a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. But a preacher who has personally passed through this experience can really speak *from* the heart, and what he says will go *into* the hearts of his hearers. It is a mere accident when some one is awakened from sin and converted by a preacher who is himself unconverted.

Accordingly, when preparing to preach, the preacher must draw up a strategical plan in order to win his hearers for the kingdom of God. Otherwise the hearers may say of his sermon, "Oh, that was nice!" but that will be all. They will leave the church with an empty heart.

"*If any one were well versed in this art, I mean, whoever could properly make this distinction, he would deserve to be called a Doctor of Theology.* For the Law and the Gospel must be kept apart the one from the other. The Law is to terrify men and make them shy and despairing, especially rude and vulgar people, until they learn that they *cannot* do what the Law demands nor achieve God's favor. That will make them despair of themselves; for they can never accomplish this aim, obtaining God's favor by their efforts to keep the Law. Dr. Staupitz, I remember, said to me on a certain occasion: 'I have more than a thousand times lied to God that I would become godly and never did what I promised. Now I shall never again make up my mind to become godly; for I see that I cannot carry out my resolution. I shall never lie to God any more.' That was also my experience under the papacy: I was very anxious to become godly; but how long did it last? Only until I had finished reading Mass. An hour later I was

more evil than before. This state of affairs goes on until a person is quite weary and is forced to say: I shall put away from me being godly according to Moses and the Law. I shall follow another preacher, who says to me: 'Come to Me if you are weary; I will refresh you.' Let this word, 'Come to Me,' sound pleasant to you. *This* Preacher does not teach that you *can* love God or how you *must* act and live, but He tells you how you must become godly and be saved *spite of the fact* that you can *not* do as you should. That preaching is wholly different from the teaching of the Law of Moses, which is concerned only with works. The Law says: Thou shalt not sin; go ahead and be godly; do this, do that. But Christ says: Thou art not godly, but I have been godly in thy place. Take from Me what I give thee, — thy sins are forgiven thee (*remissa sunt tibi peccata*). *These two sermons must be preached and urged upon men at the same time.* It is not right for you to stick to one doctrine only; for it is only the Law that makes men thirsty, and it does this only to terrify men's hearts. But it is the Gospel alone that satisfies men, makes them cheerful, revives them, and comforts their consciences. Now, lest the preaching of the Gospel only produce lazy, frigid Christians, who imagine that they need not do good works, the Law says to the Old Adam: Sin not; be godly; shun that, do this, etc. But when the conscience feels these smitings and realizes that the Law is not a mere cipher, man becomes terror-stricken. Then you must hear the teaching of the Gospel because you have sinned. Then hear the Teacher Christ, who says to you: 'Come, I will not let you die of thirst; I will give you to drink.' . . . If these facts had been preached to me, Dr. Luther, when I was young, I should have spared my body considerably and should not have become a monk. But now that these truths are preached, the people of this godless world despise them. For they have not endured the sweat-bath through which I and others had to pass under the papacy. Not having felt the agony of conscience, they despise the Gospel. They have never thirsted, therefore they start all manner of sects and fanatical doings. It is a true saying: *Dulcia non meminit, qui non gustavit amara* (He does not remember sweet things who has not tasted bitter things). He who has never been athirst has no taste. Thirst is a good hostler, and hunger is a good cook. But where there is no thirst, even the best drink is not relished.

"The doctrine of the Law, then, was given for this purpose, that a person be given a sweat-bath of anguish and sorrow under the teaching of the Law. Otherwise men become sated and sur-

feited and lose all relish of the Gospel. If you meet with such people, pass them by; we are not preaching to them. This preaching is for the thirsty; to them the message is brought: 'Let them come to Me; I will give them to drink and refresh them.'"

In the manner here sketched by Luther the Law and Gospel must be proclaimed, without mingling the one with the other.

A preacher who is not simple in his preaching preaches [not Christ, but] himself. And any one preaching himself preaches people into perdition, even when they say of his preaching: "Ah, but that was beautiful! That man is an orator!" Even a true, honest preacher is visited by thoughts of vanity that spring from his sinful flesh. But as soon as he notices this, he casts these cursed thoughts of vanity from him and cries to God to rid him of them. He enters his pulpit a humble man. People can tell whether his preaching comes from the heart or not.

Of course, you cannot speak like Luther. Still you must revolve in your mind this problem: "How can I preach the Law to the secure and the Gospel to crushed sinners?" Every sermon must contain both doctrines. When either is missing, the other is wrong. For any sermon is wrong that does not present all that is necessary to a person's salvation. You must not think that you have rightly divided the Word of Truth if you preach the Law in one part of your sermon and the Gospel in the other. No; a topographical division of this kind is worthless. Both doctrines may be contained in one sentence. But in your audience every one must get the impression, "That is meant for me." Even the most comforting and cheering sermon must contain also the Law.

Let me cite you a passage from Luther's exposition of Ps. 23, 3: "He restoreth my soul." Luther says: "Inasmuch as the Lord, our God, has a twofold Word, the Law and the Gospel, the prophet by these words, 'He restoreth my soul,' indicates with sufficient clearness that he is not speaking of the Law, but of the Gospel."

When you meet with statements in your Bible containing threats of punishment, classify them with the Law. Words that comfort, words that speak of giving, offering something, belong to the Gospel. You will not find a Gospel pericope from which you could not preach both the Law and the Gospel.

Luther proceeds: "The Law cannot restore the soul, for it is a word that makes demands upon us and commands us to love God with our whole heart, etc., and our neighbor as ourselves. The Law condemns every person who fails to do this and pronounces this sentence upon him: Cursed is every one that doeth not all

that is written in the book of the Law. Now, it is certain that no man on earth is doing this. Therefore, in due time the Law approaches the sinner, filling his soul with sadness and fear. If no respite is provided from its smiting, it continues its onslaught, forcing the sinner into despair and eternal damnation. Therefore St. Paul says: By the law is only the knowledge of sin. Again: 'The Law worketh nothing but wrath.' The Gospel, however, is a blessed word; it makes no demands upon us, but only proclaims good tidings to us, namely, that God has given His only Son for us poor sinners to be our Shepherd, to seek us famished and scattered sheep, to give His life for our redemption from sin, everlasting death, and the power of the devil."

The question might here be raised why it is that the Law leads men into the horrible sin of despair. That is merely an accidental feature of its operation. In and by itself the Law, too, is good.

Let me follow this up with a passage from Luther's *Commentary on Galatians*. On Gal. 2, 3. 4 Luther says: "Accordingly, when your conscience is terrified by the Law, and you are wrestling with God, the Judge, do not consult your reason or the Law, but take your stand alone on the grace of God and His word of consolation. Cling to this and act as if you had never heard a word of the Law. Enter into that darkness (Ex. 20, 21) where neither the Law nor human reason gives its light, but only the dark word of faith. The believer relies with certainty on being saved in Christ, without the Law and regardless of it. Thus the Gospel, without, and regardless of, the light of the Law and reason, leads us into the darkness of faith, where the Law and reason exercise no authority. We must, indeed, hear the Law also, yet in its proper place and at the proper time. When Moses is in the mountain, speaking with God face to face, he does not have the Law; he does not legislate and administer the Law. When he has come down from the mountain, he is a legislator and governs the people with the Law. In this manner our conscience is to be exempt from the Law, but our body is to obey the Law. . . . Hence, any person who understands well how to distinguish the Gospel from the Law may thank God and know that he is a theologian. In times of tribulation, indeed, I do not know how to do this as efficiently as I should. Both teachings are to be distinguished in such a manner that you place the Gospel in heaven, the Law on earth; that you call the righteousness which the Gospel proclaims a heavenly and divine righteousness, the righteousness which the Law proclaims an

earthly and human righteousness; and that you are as careful to distinguish the righteousness of the Gospel from the righteousness of the Law as God with great care has separated heaven from earth, light from darkness, day from night. One of these doctrines shall be the light of day, the other the darkness of night. Would to God that we could put them still farther apart!

"Therefore, when we are speaking of faith and are ministering to men's consciences, the Law is to be utterly excluded; it must remain on earth. When you treat of what men are to do, light the night-lamp of works, or of the righteousness that is by way of the Law. Thus the sun and the unmeasured light of the Gospel and of grace is to shine during the day; the lamp of the Law, however, at night. A conscience, then, that has been thrown into terror by feeling its sin should argue thus: I am now engaged in earthly tasks. Here let the donkey labor, slave, and carry the burden that is laid upon him. That is to say, Let the body with its members be subject to the Law. But when you ascend to heaven, leave the donkey with its burden on earth. For the conscience of a believer in Christ has nothing to do with the Law and its works and the righteousness of this earth. Thus the donkey stays in the valley, while the conscience, with Isaac, goes up into the mountain, ignores the Law and its works, and keeps its eye only on the forgiveness of sin, on nothing but that righteousness which is exhibited and given to us in Christ. . . . This point of doctrine, *viz.*, the distinction between the Law and the Gospel, we must needs know because it contains the sum of all Christian teaching. Let every one who is zealous to be godly strive, then, with the greatest care to learn how to make this distinction, not only in his speech, but also in truth and in his experience, that is, in his heart and conscience. The distinction is made easily enough in words. But in affliction you will realize that the Gospel is a rare guest in men's consciences, while the Law is their daily and familiar companion. For human reason has by nature the knowledge of the Law. Therefore, when the conscience is terrified by sin, which the Law points out and magnifies, you are to speak thus: There is a time to die, and there is a time to live; there is a time for hearing the Law, and there is a time to be unconcerned about the Law; there is a time to hear the Gospel, and there is a time for acting as if you were ignorant of the Gospel. At this moment let the Law begone and let the Gospel come; for now is not the time to hear the Law, but the Gospel. But how about this? You have not done any good; on the contrary, you have committed grievous sins. I admit that,

but I have the forgiveness of sins through Christ, for whose sake all my sins have been remitted. However, while the conscience is not engaged in this conflict, while you are obliged to discharge the ordinary functions of your office, at a time when you must act as a minister of the Word, a magistrate, a husband, a teacher, a pupil, etc., it is not in season to hear the Gospel, but the Law. At such a time you are to perform the duties of your profession," etc.

Our own righteousness is to serve us for this life, but the righteousness which the Gospel brings us is a heavenly righteousness.

We shall hear anon that Law and Gospel must be kept apart not only in the sermon, but above all in a person's own heart.

FOURTH EVENING LECTURE.

(October 3, 1884.)

When a theologian is asked to yield and make concessions in order that peace may at last be established in the Church, but refuses to do so even in a single point of doctrine, such an action looks to human reason like intolerable stubbornness, yea, like downright malice. That is the reason why such theologians are loved and praised by few men during their lifetime. Most men rather revile them as disturbers of the peace, yea, as destroyers of the kingdom of God. They are regarded as men worthy of contempt. But in the end it becomes manifest that this very determined, inexorable tenacity in clinging to the pure teaching of the divine Word by no means tears down the Church; on the contrary, it is just this which, in the midst of greatest dissension, builds up the Church and ultimately brings about genuine peace. Therefore, woe to the Church which has no men of this stripe, men who stand as watchmen on the walls of Zion, sound the alarm whenever a foe threatens to rush the walls, and rally to the banner of Jesus Christ for a holy war!

Try and picture to yourselves what would have happened if Athanasius had made a slight concession in the doctrine of the deity of Christ. He could have made a compromise with the Arians and put his conscience at ease; for the Arians declared that they, too, believed Christ to be God, only not from eternity. They said: ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν (there was a time when He did not exist), meaning, He had *become* God. But they added: "Never-

theless He is to be worshiped, for He is God." Even at that remote time, had Athanasius yielded, the Church would have been hurled from the one Rock on which it is founded, which is none other than Jesus Christ.

Again, imagine what would have happened if Augustine had made a slight concession in the doctrine of man's free will, or rather of the utter incapacity of man for matters spiritual. He, too, could have made a compromise with the Pelagians and put his conscience at ease because the Pelagians declared: "Yes, indeed; without the aid of God's grace no man can be saved." But by the grace of God they meant the divine gift which is imparted to every man. Even at that time, had Augustine yielded, the Church would have lost the core of the Gospel. There would have been nothing left of it but the empty, hollow shell. Aye, the Church would have retained nothing but the name of the Gospel. For the doctrine of the Gospel that man is made righteous in the sight of God and saved by nothing but the pure grace of God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, is, as everybody knows, the most important doctrine, the marrow and substance of Christian teaching. Wherever this doctrine is not proclaimed, there is no Christ, no Gospel, no salvation; there men perish, and for such people it has been in vain that the Son of God has come into the world.

Lastly, picture to yourselves what would have happened if Luther had made a slight concession in the doctrine of the Holy Supper. At the time of the Marburg Colloquy he could have made a compromise with Zwingli and put his conscience at ease, because the Zwinglians said: "We, too, believe in a certain presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, but not in the presence of Christ's corporeal substance, because God does not set up such sublime, incomprehensible things for us to believe." By this claim Zwingli made Christianity in its entirety a questionable matter, and even Melanchthon, who was usually greatly inclined to make concessions, declared that Zwingli had relapsed into paganism. Had Luther yielded, the Church would have become a prey to rationalism, which places man's reason above the plain Word of God.

Let us, therefore, bless all the faithful champions who have fought for every point of Christian doctrine, unconcerned about the favor of men and disregarding their threatenings. Their ignominy, though it often was great, has not been borne in vain. Men cursed them, but they continued bearing their testimony until death, and now they wear the crown of glory and enjoy the blissful

communion of Christ and of all the angels and the elect. Their labor and their fierce battling has not been in vain; for even now, after 1500 years, or, in the last-named case, after several centuries, the Church is reaping what they sowed.

Let us, then, my friends, likewise hold fast the treasure of the pure doctrine. Do not consider it strange if on that account you must bear reproach the same as they did. Consider that the word of Sirach, chap. 4, 33: "Even unto death fight for justice, and God will overthrow thy enemies for thee," will come true in our case too. Let this be your slogan: Fight unto death in behalf of the truth, and the Lord will fight for you! —

We now take up a thesis for study which tells us that, since the two doctrines of Scripture, Law and Gospel, are so different from each other, we must keep them distinct also in our preaching.

Thesis II.

Only he is an orthodox teacher who not only presents all the articles of faith in accordance with Scripture, but also rightly distinguishes from each other the Law and the Gospel.

This thesis divides into two parts. The first part states a requisite of an orthodox teacher, *viz.*, that he must present all the articles of faith in accordance with Scripture. This, in our day, is regarded as an unheard-of demand. Even in circles of so-called believers, people act as if they were shocked when they hear some one say: "I have found the truth; I am certain concerning every doctrine of revelation." Such a claim is considered a piece of arrogance. Young students in particular dare not set up such a claim. In Germany they are told: "Whatever you do, do not believe that you have already found the truth. Keep on studying until you have reached the goal. Never say you have already reached it!" Even the German professors who speak thus to their students never reach the goal; if one of them claims that he has, he is immediately regarded with suspicion.

There are people who find their delight, not in eating and drinking or in hoarding up wealth or in a life of ease, but in quenching their thirst for knowledge. True, in theory this tendency is not approved, but that is practically what the professors are advising when they say warningly to their students: "Never speak of the Christian doctrine in terms of finality!" They are afraid that some one might speak with finality on an article of faith instead of ceaselessly rolling the stone of research, as Sisyphus

in the Greek hell is rolling the stone that he wants to bring to a higher level and which always slips from him. That was the reason, too, why Kahnis, who had been a faithful Lutheran, sought to justify himself in the preface of his miserable *Dogmatik* by citing the Latin proverb: *Dies diem docet* (One day is the teacher of the next). He meant to say: "A year ago I believed this and that; but other thoughts came to me, and I found other doctrines." That is a miserable, yes, an appalling position for a theologian to take. Scripture requires that we have the Word of God absolutely pure and unadulterated and that we be able to say when coming down from the pulpit: "I could take an oath upon it that I have rightly preached the Word of God. Even to an angel coming down from heaven I could say: My preaching has been correct." That explains the paradox remark of Luther that a preacher must not pray the Lord's Prayer when coming down from the pulpit, but that he should do so before the sermon. For an orthodox preacher need not pray after delivering his sermon: "Forgive me my trespasses," since he can say: "I have proclaimed the pure truth." In our day, men have become merged in skepticism to such an extent that they regard any one who sets up the aforementioned claim as a semilunatic.

The Word of God tells us in a passage where the Lord is introduced as speaking, Jer. 23, 28: *He that hath My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.* Our sermons, then, are to contain only wheat and no chaff.

The Apostle Paul warns the Galatians, chap. 5, 9: *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.* He means to say: A single false teaching vitiates the entire doctrine.

The warning with which John concludes the last book of the Bible is sounded as far back as in the days of Moses, who says, Deut. 4, 2: *Ye shall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it.*

It is, then, a diabolical teaching to say: "You will never achieve the ability to give a Scriptural presentation of the articles of faith." Especially when students hear a statement like this, it is as if some hellish poison were injected into their hearts; for after that they will no longer show any zeal to get to the bottom of the truth, to have clear conceptions of the truth.

But suppose some one could truthfully say, "There was no false teaching in my sermon," still his entire sermon may have been wrong. Can that be true? The second part of our thesis says so.

Only he is an orthodox teacher who, in addition to other requirements, rightly distinguishes Law and Gospel from each other. That is the final test of a proper sermon. The value of a sermon depends not only on this, that every statement in it be taken from the Word of God and be in agreement with the same, but also on this, whether Law and Gospel have been rightly divided. Of the same building materials furnished two architects one will construct a magnificent building, while the other, using the same materials, makes a botch of it. Crack-brained man that he is, he may want to begin at the roof or place all windows in one room or pile up layers of stone or brick in such a fashion that a crooked wall will be the result. The one house will be out of plumb and such a bungling piece of work that it will collapse while the other stands firm and is a habitable and pleasant abode. In like manner all doctrines may be treated in sermons by two preachers: the one sermon may be a glorious and precious piece of work, while the other is wrong throughout. Note this well. When you hear some sectarian preach, you may say, "What he said was the truth," and yet you do not feel satisfied. Here is the key for unlocking this mystery: the preacher did not rightly divide Law and Gospel, and hence everything went wrong. He preached Law where he should have preached Gospel, and he offered Gospel truth where he should have presented the Law. Now, any one following such a preacher goes astray; he does not arrive at the sure foundation of the divine truth; he does not attain to an assurance of grace and salvation. Not infrequently this happens in sermons of students. There are found in them comforting remarks like these: "It is all by grace," and then we are told: "We must do good works," and then again: "With our works we cannot gain salvation." There is no order in a sermon of this kind; nobody understands it, least of all the person who needs it most. There must be a proper division of Law and Gospel. Be careful to follow this rule in writing your sermons. Perhaps, for once, the words veritably flowed into your pen. But I would advise you to read your sermon over and see whether you have rightly divided Law and Gospel; for then you may often discover that there is where you made a mistake. In that case your sermon is wrong although it contains no false doctrine.

Now let me also give you the Bible-texts which testify to the truths just stated. We read 2 Tim. 2, 15: *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.* The term ὀρθοτομεῖν in this text, which has been rendered by "rightly dividing," is plainly used

in a metaphorical sense. It is derived either from the action of priests when dividing the sacrificial offerings or from that of the head of a family when he apportions food and drink to the members of his household. The latter meaning seems to be the correct one; however, many of our theologians adopt the former.

Luke 12, 42 the Lord says: *Who, then, is that faithful and wise steward whom his lord shall make ruler over his household to give them their portion of meat in due season?* Two things are here required of a good householder. In the first place, he must at the proper time furnish the servants in his house and the children everything that they need; in the second place, he must give to each individual his due portion, exactly what he or she needs. If a steward were to do no more than bring out of his larder and cellar all that is in them and put it on a pile, he would not act wisely; the children, probably, would grab large portions, and the rest might not get anything. He must give to each the right quantity, according to the amount of work that he has done. When children are at the table with adults, he would be foolish to set meat and wine before children and milk and light food before adults. But how difficult it is to perceive that these very mistakes are often made in sermons! A preacher must not throw all doctrines in a jumble before his hearers, just as they come into his mind, but cut for each of his hearers a portion such as he needs. He is to be like an apothecary, who must give that medicine to the sick which is for the *particular* ailment with which they are afflicted. In the same manner a preacher must give to each of his hearers his due: he must see to it that secure, care-free, and wilful sinners hear the thunderings of the Law, contrite sinners, however, the sweet voice of the Savior's grace. That is what it means to give to each hearer his due.

Ezek. 13, 18—22 we read: *Thus saith the Lord God; Woe to them* that sew pillows to all armholes and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of My people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you? And will ye pollute Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread to slay the souls that should not die and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to My people that hear your lies? Wherefore thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against your pillows wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms and will let the souls*

* The Authorized Version here inserts *women*.

go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly. Your kerchiefs also will I tear and deliver My people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the Lord, because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad and strengthened the hands of the wicked that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life. Here you have an instance of the execration of a preacher who knows that his congregation needs an application of the Law, but who for a piece of bread keeps silent. Verily, let woe be cried, woe upon every one who furnishes soft pillows and cushions for secure sinners! They are lulling those to sleep with the Gospel who ought to be roused from their sleep by means of the Law. It is a wrong application of the Gospel to preach it to such as are not afraid of sinning. On the other hand, an even more horrible situation is created if the pastor is a legalistic teacher, who refuses to preach the Gospel to his congregation because he says: "These people will misuse it anyway." Are poor sinners on that account to be deprived of the Gospel? Let the wicked perish; nevertheless the children of God shall know how near at hand their help is and how easily it is obtained. Any one withholding the Gospel from such as are in need of consolation fails to divide Law and Gospel. Woe and again woe to such a one!

Zechariah relates the following, chap. 11, 7: *I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.* A real, spiritual shepherd has two staves, or rods. The rod Beauty is the Gospel, and the rod Bands is the Law. He must be well informed as to the persons to whom he is to apply either the one or the other of these staves. The Messiah — who is the Speaker in this passage — says that He used the rod Bands against the flock of slaughter, that is, against sheep which were to be slaughtered and not to be led to the pasture. The "poor of the flock" represent poor sinners. Among them He uses the comforting staff and rod of the Gospel. Most preachers make the mistake of hurling the rod Bands among the sheep and using the rod Beauty for wicked knaves.

(By the way, Luther's translation of this passage is unexcelled. Would that the people who want to revise Luther's Bible would stick to their private affairs!)

Even nature teaches that certain materials must not be mixed if they are to retain their salutary virtue. There are certain substances that are, by themselves, salutary; but when they are mixed,

they are turned into poison. That is what happens when Law and Gospel are mingled. Or take an instance from colors: when you combine yellow and blue, it is neither yellow nor blue, but green. In like manner there arises a third substance (*tertium genus*), when Law and Gospel are confounded in a sermon. The new substance is entirely foreign to either original substance and causes both of them to lose their virtue.

In his *Sermon on the Distinction between the Law and the Gospel* (St. L. Ed. IX, 799f.) Luther writes: "It is therefore a matter of utmost necessity that these two kinds of God's Word be well and properly distinguished. Where this is not done, neither the Law nor the Gospel can be understood, and the consciences of men must perish with blindness and error. The Law has its goal fixed beyond which it cannot go or accomplish anything, namely, until the point is reached where Christ comes in. It must terrify the impenitent with threats of the wrath and displeasure of God. Likewise the Gospel has its peculiar function and task, *viz.*, to proclaim forgiveness of sin to sorrowing souls. These two may not be commingled, nor the one substituted for the other, without a falsification of doctrine. For while the Law and the Gospel are indeed equally God's Word, they are not the same doctrine."

You may correctly state what the Law says and what the Gospel says. But when you frame your statement so as to commingle both, you produce poison for souls. Remember: Law and Gospel are God's Word, but different kinds of doctrine.

A person who does not understand this difference, the true difference, has nothing whatever to offer people. But even the mere knowledge or memorizing of this difference does not prove helpful; for one can learn the facts of this difference in a few hours when preparing for an examination. This knowledge must be reenforced by experience. Not until that is done, will a person understand that the distinction between these two doctrines is a glorious one.

In the beginning of the sermon just referred to Luther says: "This is the meaning of St. Paul: Among Christians both preachers and hearers must adopt and teach a definite distinction between the Law and the Gospel, between works and faith. Accordingly, Paul enjoins this distinction upon Timothy when he exhorts him, 2 Tim. 2, 15, rightly to divide the Word of Truth, etc. This distinction between the Law and the Gospel is the supreme art among Christians. Each and all of those who glory in the name of Christian or have adopted it may and should understand this art. For wher-

ever there is a deficiency in this respect, it is impossible to distinguish a Christian from a Gentile or a Jew. So important is this distinction. For this reason Paul so strenuously insists that these two doctrines, the Law and the Gospel, be well and properly distinguished among Christians. Both the Law, or the Ten Commandments, and the Gospel are indeed God's Word; the latter was given by God at the beginning, in Paradise, the former on Mount Sinai. But the matter of decisive importance is this, that these two words be properly distinguished and not commingled; otherwise the true meaning of neither will be known nor retained; yea, imagining that we have both, we shall find that we possess neither."

FIFTH EVENING LECTURE.

(October 17, 1884.)

It is a glorious and marvelous arrangement, passing comprehension, that God governs the kingdoms of this world, not by immediate action, but through the agency of men who — not to mention other things — are far too short-sighted and far too feeble for this task. But it is marvelous beyond comparison with this arrangement that even in His Kingdom of Grace, God performs the planting, administering, extending, and preserving of His kingdom, not in an immediate manner, but through men who are altogether unfit for this task. This is proof of a loving-kindness and condescension to men on the part of God and, besides, of a wisdom of His that no intellect of men can encompass or sound to its depth. For who can measure the greatness of God's love which is revealed in the fact that God desires not only to save this world of apostate men, but also to employ men from this very world, fellow-sinners, for this task? Who can compute the riches of the wisdom of God, who knows how to accomplish the work of saving men by the agency of other men who are quite unfit and unqualified for this work, and that He has hitherto gloriously pursued, and still is pursuing, this work?

My dear friends, you are beholding in this arrangement a mighty reason, not only for humble wonder, but also for heartfelt joy and exultation; for in days to come God wants to make you instruments of His grace for this work. Stop and consider: If you could learn at this place how to prolong the life of those who will be entrusted to your care by fifty years or even to raise the dead

to a new lease of life here in time, how great and glorious your calling would appear, not only to you, but to all men! In what great demand you would be! How you would be esteemed as extraordinary men! What a treasure men would think they had obtained if they had obtained you! And yet, all this would be as nothing compared with the sublimeness and glory of the calling for which you are to be trained here. You are not to prolong this poor, temporal life of those who will be entrusted to your care, but you are to bring to them the life that is the sum of all bliss, the life that is eternal, without end. You are not to raise those entrusted to your care from temporal death to live once more this poor temporal life, but you are to pluck them out of their spiritual and eternal death and usher them into heaven.

Oh, if you would seriously consider what a great honor God means to confer on you, you would go down on your knees every day, yea, every hour; you would prostrate yourselves in the dust and exclaim with the psalmist: "Lord, what is man that Thou takest knowledge of him, or the son of man, that Thou makest account of him!" Ps. 144, 3. At the same time you would receive an incentive from God's choice of you to surrender yourselves to the merciful God every day and every hour and say: "Lord, here I am with my body and soul and all my strength. I am willing to consume them all in Thy service." How glad and ready you would be to make every sacrifice in the interest of your calling and allow yourselves to be fashioned into tools of God!

However, the matter of primary importance to you is that before teaching others you first obtain a very thorough and vital knowledge yourselves of those things which God by His prophets and apostles has revealed for the salvation of men. Let us, then, cheerfully proceed in the consideration of our highly important subject.

To begin with, let me submit two testimonies from *Johann Gerhard*. True, he cannot speak of facts of experience with that divine rhetoric that was granted to Luther. However, Gerhard made a thorough study of Luther and gave a systematic presentation of Luther's teaching. In the chapter on the Gospel, § 55, he says: "The distinction between the Law and the Gospel must be maintained at every point." Mark well — *at every point*. There is not a doctrine that does not call upon us rightly to divide Law and Gospel.

Gerhard proceeds: "However, this distinction must be observed above all at two points: First, in the article of justification,

since we are not justified by the Law, which, owing to the corruption and weakness of our flesh, is in a certain way, though accidentally, incapacitated for this task. Rom. 8, 3." The Law does not belong in the doctrine of justification. That is a most important point. We cannot be saved by the Law; accordingly, God provides another means for us by which we can be saved.

Gerhard continues: "But our justification is from the Gospel, in which the righteousness that is valid in God's sight is revealed without the Law, Rom. 3, 21; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, Rom. 1, 16." All now depends on this other means which God has provided, on our accepting these tidings of great joy, the Gospel, and in it the doctrine of justification, without which the Bible would sink to the level of any other book of morals.

To return to Gerhard: "For this reason men should be exhorted, yea, urged to perform good works according to the norm of the Law. These works, however, must not be brought into the august place where our justification in the sight of God occurs. For at that point there is a ceaseless conflict between man's doing and his believing, between God's grace and man's works, between Law and Gospel." Woe to us if, when about to expound the Gospel, we mingle the Law with it! That is what we are doing when, in expounding the Gospel, we say more than, "Accept this message!" Every addition would be Law. The Gospel demands nothing of us; it only says: "Come, eat and drink." What it offers to us is the Great Supper. Here is where most preachers make their mistake. They are afraid that by preaching the Gospel too clearly they will be the fault if people lapse into sin. They imagine that the Gospel is food for the carnal-minded. True, to many the Gospel becomes a savor of death unto death, but that is not the fault of the Gospel. That happens only because men do not accept, do not believe, the Gospel. Faith is not the mere thought "I believe." My whole heart must have become seized by the Gospel and have come to rest in it. When that happens, I am transformed and cannot but love and serve God. Most urgent admonitions must indeed be administered to men, even after they have become believers, but these admonitions must not be brought into the solemn meeting where God justifies the sinner. The Law must first discharge its function in order that those who hear it may accept the Gospel with a hungering and thirsting soul and drink their fill of it. As soon as a person has become a poor sinner, as soon as he is aware of the fact that he cannot be saved

by his own effort, even before a spark of love has been kindled in him, Christ says: "There is My man! Come to Me just as thou art. I will help thee; I will take from thee the burden that oppresses thee, and what I shall lay on thee is a light burden and an easy yoke." The principal thing that I have to tell a person when explaining to him how he can become righteous is that I announce to him the free grace of God, concealing nothing, saying none other things to him than what God says in the Gospel. A hedge must be made around Mount Sinai, but not around Golgotha. At the latter place all wrath of God has been appeased.

Now, the Lord has given two keys to the Church and, through the Church, to all ministers: the binding and the releasing key. The binding key locks heaven; the releasing key opens it. These two wonderful keys the preacher holds in his hand; for the Church gave them to him when it conferred on him the office of the ministry.

Continuing, Gerhard tells us that the distinction between the Law and the Gospel must be observed, "secondly, in using the keys of the Church. Forgiveness of sin must not be proclaimed to impenitent and secure sinners." That would be an abominable commingling of Law and Gospel. That would be like stuffing food into the mouth of a person who is already filled to the point of vomiting. What must be announced to such a person, Gerhard says, is "rather the wrath of God from the Law. Rom. 2, 9: 'Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.' 1 Tim. 1, 9: 'The Law is . . . made . . . for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly,' whom it crushes with the weight of its damning accusations. To contrite hearts not the threats of the Law, but the oil of evangelical consolation must be administered. Is. 66, 1. 2: 'Where is the place of My rest? . . . To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My Word.' Matt. 11, 5: 'The poor have the Gospel preached to them.'" When I know that a person is not in a condition to have the Gospel preached to him, I must not proclaim it to him. However, when I speak in public, the situation is different. There I must take into consideration chiefly the elect children of God. Still I must preach the Law even there. A sermon that does not contain any Law is worthless. In every gathering of people there are always impenitent persons, who must be roused from their sleep of sin and terrified. — Any one who, on being admonished, promptly says: "Ah, bosh! that does not concern me," shows that his heart has not yet been crushed.

In another place in the same chapter, § 52, *Gerhard* writes: "There are several reasons why this distinction between the Law and the Gospel must be accurately defined and strictly adhered to. In the first place, many instances from the history of the Church of days gone by might be adduced to show that the pure teaching of the article of justification is not preserved, and absolutely cannot be preserved, if the distinction of these two doctrines is neglected." Woe to him who injects poison into the doctrine of justification! He poisons the well which God has dug for man's salvation. Whoever takes this doctrine away from man robs him of everything; for he takes the very heart out of Christianity, which ceases to pulsate after this attack. The ladder for mounting up to heaven is taken away, and there is no longer any hope of saving man. "In the second place," Gerhard continues, "when the doctrine of the Gospel is not separated from the Law by definite boundary-lines, the blessings of Christ are considerably obscured." By ascribing to man some share in his own salvation, we rob Christ of all His glory. God has created us without our cooperation, and He wants to save us the same way. We are to thank Him for having created us with a hope of life everlasting. Even so He alone wants to save us. Woe to him who says that he must contribute something towards his own salvation! He deprives Christ of His entire merit. For Jesus is called the Savior, not a helper towards salvation, such as preachers are. Jesus has achieved our entire salvation. That is why we were so determined in our Predestinarian Controversy. For the basic element in the controversy has been that we insisted on keeping Law and Gospel separate, while our opponents mingle the one with the other. When they hear from us this statement: "Out of pure mercy, God has elected us to the praise of the glory of His grace; God vindicates for Himself exclusively the glory of saving us," etc., they say: "That is a horrible doctrine! If that were true, God would be partial. No, He must have beheld something in men that prompted Him to elect this or that *particular* man. When He beheld something good in a person, He elected him." If that were so, man would really be the principal cause of his salvation. In that case man could say, "Thank God, I have done my share towards being saved." However, when we shall have arrived in our heavenly fatherland, this is what we shall say: "If I had had my own way, I should never have found salvation; and even supposing I had found it by myself, I should have lost it again. Thou, O God, didst come and draw me to Thy Word, partly by tribulation, partly by anguish of heart, partly by

sickness, etc. All these things Thou hast used as means to bring me into heaven, while I was always striving for perdition." Yonder we shall see — and marvel — that there has not been an hour when God did not work in us to save us, and that there has not been an hour when we — wanted to be saved. Indeed, we are forced to say to God: "Thou alone hast redemeed me; Thou alone dost save me." Verily, as sure as there is a living God in heaven, I cannot do anything towards my salvation. That is the point under discussion in this controversy.

In conclusion, Gerhard says: "In the third place, commingling Law and Gospel necessarily produces confusion of consciences, because there is no true, reliable, and abiding comfort for consciences that have been alarmed and terrified if the gracious promises of the Gospel are falsified." Commingling Law and Gospel brings about unrest of conscience. No matter how comforting the preaching is that people hear, it is of no help to them if there is a sting in it. The honey of the Gospel may at first taste good, but if a sting of the Law goes with it, everything is spoiled. My conscience cannot come to rest if I cannot say: "Nevertheless, according to His grace, God will receive me." If the preacher says to me: "Come, for all things are now ready — provided you do this or that," I am lost. For in that case I must ask myself, "Have I done as God desires?" and I shall find no help.

SIXTH EVENING LECTURE.

(October 24, 1884.)

A godly Lutheran theologian of a former age, among other things, gives the following description of students of theology: "When they arrive at the university, they know everything. In their second year of study they become aware of some things that they do not know. At the close of their last year of study they are convinced that they know nothing at all." We can easily see the lesson which the old theologian wished to convey, *viz.*, that there is no worse delusion than this, to think that one has advanced very far in the acquisition of knowledge and that the knowledge of one who is conceited because of what he knows surely is but very superficial. There is no doubt that what the old theologian said is quite right. It perfectly agrees with the statement of the apostle in 1 Cor. 8, 2: "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

Accordingly, all great pedagogs and teachers have warned their pupils, saying: *Non multa, sed multum* (Do not study many different things, but much of one thing). Everything depends, not on how much we know, but *how well* we know it. The greater the progress a person makes in his science, the more rapidly does he become convinced that he is still lacking many things. He does not adopt the slogan of our times: *Quantum est, quod scimus!* (Oh, how gloriously much we know!), but repeats the confession of the great philosopher: *Quantum est, quod nescimus!* (Alas, how great is our ignorance!). The more truly learned a person is, the humbler he is; for he knows how much he is still lacking, within what narrow boundaries his knowledge is confined, and how much there still remains unexplored.

Now, if this observation applies to every kind of knowledge, to every department of science, it applies with special emphasis to the domain of theology. Here is where the well-known saying of the Apostle Paul applies, which he uttered, not concerning genuine knowledge, but about the conceited knowledge to which I referred. Accordingly, Luther addresses this word of warning to every lazy student: "Study! *Attende lectioni!* [Keep on reading!] You cannot read too much in the Scriptures; for what you read you cannot too fully comprehend, what you understand you cannot teach too well, and what you are teaching well you cannot put into practise too well. *Experto crede Ruperto* [Believe Rupert, for he knows from experience]."

Every true understanding, every genuine knowledge in theology, is obtained with great difficulty. But the greatest difficulty occurs in the study of the doctrine which is discussed in these evening lectures. The third thesis, now before us, furnishes an excellent opportunity for making this point clear to us.

Thesis III.

Rightly distinguishing the Law and the Gospel is the most difficult and the highest art of Christians in general and of theologians in particular. It is taught only by the Holy Spirit in the school of experience.

Possibly some one among you is thinking, "Is this thesis really true? I have now heard five lectures on this subject, and it is perfectly clear to me. If this is the most difficult art, I know it." But, my dear friend, you are greatly mistaken. Consider that the thesis does not mean that the doctrine of the Law and the Gospel

is so difficult that it cannot be learned without the aid of the Holy Ghost. It is easy — easy enough for children to learn. Every child can comprehend this doctrine. It is contained in every catechism. It is not strong meat, but milk. It is the first letters of the alphabet, it belongs to the rudiments of Christianity; for without this doctrine no person can be a Christian. Even a small child soon learns these facts: "The First Part of the Catechism treats of the Ten Commandments, the Second Part of the Creed. We are first told what we are to do; next, that a person need only believe to be saved." In other words, the child observes that the Second Part does not, like the First, make demands. This doctrine of the distinction of Law and Gospel is entirely different from the doctrine of the attributes by which the three persons in the Godhead are distinct from one another; or the doctrine of predestination with its many inscrutable mysteries, or the doctrine of the communication of the divine attributes to the human nature of Christ. These doctrines exceed the grasp of children and cannot be comprehended by them. But the doctrine of the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is different. You know it now. But at the present time we are studying the *application* and the *use* of this doctrine. The practical application of this doctrine presents difficulties which no man can surmount by reasonable reflections. The Holy Spirit must teach men this in the school of experience. The difficulties of mastering this art confront the minister, in the first place, in so far as he is a Christian; in the second place, in so far as he is a minister.

In the first place, then, the proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel is a difficult and high art to the minister in so far as he is a Christian. Indeed, the proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel is the highest art which a person can learn.

We read Ps. 51, 10. 11: *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.*

Here David prays God for a right (German: *gewiss*) spirit. After his horrible fall, the shedding of innocent blood and the sin of adultery, David had lost assurance of divine grace. Absolution was, indeed, pronounced to him when he had come to a penitent knowledge of his sin, but we do not hear that he forthwith became cheerful. On the contrary, many of his psalms plainly show that he was in very great misery and affliction. When the messenger of God approached him with the declaration: "The Lord hath put away thy sin," his heart sighed, "Ah, no! That is not possible;

my sin has been too great." We behold him watering his couch with his tears, Ps. 6, 6, going about a bent and broken man, his body drying up like grass in the drought of summer. This exalted royal prophet knew the doctrine of the Law and Gospel full well. All his psalms are full of references to the distinction between the two. But when he fell into sin himself, he lacked the practical ability of applying his knowledge. He cried: "Renew a right spirit within me."

It is a characteristic of Christians to regard the Scriptures as the true, infallible Word of God. But when they are in need of comfort, they find none; they cry for mercy; they supplicate God on their knees. God made David taste the bitterness of sin. In general, we behold David after his fall more frequently in sadness than in joyful spirits, and we see that one misfortune after the other befalls him. God did not permit these misfortunes to afflict David because He had not forgiven his sin, but in order to keep him from falling into another sin. It was nothing but love and mercy that prompted God to act thus. Naturally, a person still dead in sins thinks: "Why was David so foolish as to torment his mind with a sin that had been forgiven by God?" A person reasoning thus makes of the Gospel a pillow for his carnal mind to rest on; he continues his sinful life and imagines that he will, after all, land in heaven. His Gospel is a gospel for the flesh.

Luke 5, 8 we have the cry of Peter: *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* Is not this a remarkable incident? The Lord comes to the disciple whom He had named Petros, a rock-man, and bids him and his fellow-fishermen, after an unsuccessful night on the lake, to drop their nets in deep water. Peter complied, most likely expecting, however, that he would catch nothing. But, lo! they caught such a multitude of fishes that their nets broke. Now Peter is seized with fear. He reflects: "That must be the almighty God Himself who has spoken to me. That must be my Maker. He will one day be my Judge!" He falls down at Jesus' knees and says: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He expects the Lord to say to him: "Look at the multitude of sins thou hast committed. Thou art worthy of everlasting death and damnation." Whence, then, came Peter's fright? Why did he not thank Jesus when he fell down at His knees? Because his many sins passed before his mind's eye, and in that condition it was impossible for him to express cheerful gratitude, but had to drop trembling to his knees and cry to his Lord and Savior those awful words: "Depart from me, O Lord." The devil had robbed

him of all comfort and whispered to him that he must speak thus to Jesus. He expected nothing else than to be slain by the Lord. He was incapable of distinguishing Law and Gospel. If he had been able to do this, he could have approached Jesus cheerfully, remembering that He had forgiven all his sins. Many a time in his later life he probably said to himself: "Peter, you were a great simpleton on that occasion. Instead of what you did say to Jesus, you should have said: O Lord, abide with me, for I am a sinful man." That is what he did on a later occasion when he had fallen into another sin. Then he was filled with joy unspeakable when Jesus gave him that look full of gracious compassion.

1 John 3, 19. 20 we read: *Hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things.* When our heart does not condemn us, it is easy to distinguish Law and Gospel. That is the state of a Christian. But he may get into a condition where his heart condemns him. Do what he will, he cannot silence the accusing voice within. It calls to him again and again, reminding him of former sins. The recollection of some long-forgotten sin may suddenly start up in him, and he is seized with a terrible fright. Now, if in that moment a person can rightly divide Law and Gospel, he will fall at Jesus' feet and take comfort in Jesus' merit. That, however, is not easy. One who is spiritually dead regards it as foolish to torment himself with former sins. He becomes increasingly indifferent towards all sins. A Christian, however, feels his sin and also the witness of his conscience against him.

But in the end, after Christians have learned to make the proper practical use of the distinction between the Law and the Gospel, they join St. John in saying: "God is greater than my heart; He has rendered a different verdict on men's sinning, and that applies also to me." Blessed are you if you have learned this difficult art. If you have learned it, do not imagine yourselves perfect. You will always be no more than beginners in this art. Remember this: When the Law condemns you, then immediately lay hold upon the Gospel.

Since the days of the apostles there has not been a more glorious teacher of this art than Luther. Yet he confesses that in an effort to reduce his teaching to practise he was often defeated. Spite of the fact that he had led a decent life and was not guilty of gross sins, the devil often vexed him. He tormented him with the sins of his inner life. Nonplussed, Luther would often come

to Bugenhagen, his confessor, with his worries and, kneeling, receive absolution, whereupon he would depart rejoicing.

Luther writes (St. L. Ed. IX, 806 f.): "God has given us His Word in these two forms: the Law and the Gospel. The one is from Him as well as the other; and to both He has attached a distinct order: the Law is to require of every one perfect righteousness; the Gospel is to present gratis the righteousness demanded by the Law to those who have it not (that is, to all men). Now, then, whoever has not satisfied the demands of the Law and is captive under sin and the power of death, let him turn to the Gospel. Let him believe what is preached concerning Christ, *viz.*, that He is verily the precious Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, that He has reconciled man with His Father in heaven, and from pure grace, freely and for nothing, gives to all who believe this everlasting righteousness, everlasting life and bliss. Let him cling solely to this message; let him call upon Christ, beseeching Him for grace and forgiveness of sin; and since this great gift is obtained by faith alone, let him firmly believe the message, and he shall receive according as he believes.

"This is the proper distinction, and, verily, it is of the utmost importance that it be correctly perceived. O yes, we can readily make the distinction in words and preach about it, *but to put it to use and reduce it to practise, that is a high art and not easily attained*. Papists and fanatics do not understand it at all. I observe in my own case and that of others, who know how to talk about this distinction in the very best fashion, how difficult it is. To talk about the Law's being a different word and doctrine from the Gospel, that is a common achievement, soon accomplished. But to apply the distinction in our practical experience and to make this art operative, that is labor and sorrow."

Again, *Luther* writes (St. L. Ed. IX, 808 f.): "This distinction must be observed all the more when the Law wants to force me to abandon Christ and His Gospel boon. In that emergency I must abandon the Law and say: Dear Law, if I have not done the works I should have done, do them yourself. I will not, for your sake, allow myself to be plagued to death, taken captive, and kept under your thraldom and thus forget the Gospel. Whether I have sinned, done wrong, or failed in any duty, let that be your concern, O Law. Away with you and let my heart alone; I have no room for you in my heart. But if you require me to lead a godly life here on earth, that I shall gladly do. If, however, like a housebreaker, you want to climb in where you do not belong, causing

me to lose what has been given me, I would rather not know you at all than abandon my gift."

Like two hostile forces, Law and Gospel sometimes clash with each other in a person's conscience. The Gospel says to him: "You have been received into God's grace." The Law says to him: "Do not believe it; for look at your past life. How many and grievous are your sins! Examine the thoughts and desires that you have harbored in your mind." On an occasion like this it is difficult to divide Law and Gospel. When this happens to a person, he must say to the Law: "Away with you! Your demands have all been fully met, and you have nothing to demand of me. There is One who has paid my debt." This difficulty does not occur to a person dead in his trespasses and sins; he is soon through with the Law. But the difficulty is quite real to a person who has been converted. He may run to the opposite extreme and come nigh to despair.

Luther says (St. L. Ed. IX, 802): "Place any person who is well versed in this art of dividing the Law from the Gospel at the head and call him a Doctor of Holy Writ; for without the Holy Ghost it is impossible to master this distinction. That is my personal experience; moreover, I observe in the case of other people how difficult it is to separate the teaching of the Law from that of the Gospel. The Holy Ghost is needed as Schoolmaster and Instructor in this task; otherwise no man on earth will be able to understand or learn it. That is the reason why no Pope, no false Christian, no fanatic, can divide these two from each other, especially *in causa materiali et in objecto*." Luther means to say: It is not difficult to say what the contents of the Law and the Gospel are nor at what persons they are aiming. But it is difficult to say, on the one hand, whether this particular statement is part of the Law or of the Gospel, and, on the other hand, to whom in an individual case, the Law must be applied and to whom the Gospel. The greatest difficulty is encountered with the theologians themselves.

In his Table Talk, *Luther* says (Walch, XXII, 65): "There is not a man on earth who knows how properly to divide the Law from the Gospel. When we hear about it in a sermon, we imagine that we know how to do it, but we are greatly mistaken. The Holy Ghost alone knows this art. There have been times when I imagined I understood it because during so long a time I had written a great deal about it; but believe me, when I come to a pinch, I perceive that I have widely missed the mark. Accordingly, God the Holy Ghost alone must be regarded as Master of, and Instructor in,

this art." Mark this confession of Luther, the man who had written large tomes on this subject in many years. — Let me remark, in passing, that we are always more inclined to give ear to the Law than to the Gospel.

In his commentary on Ps. 131 (St. L. Ed. IV, 2077) *Luther* writes: "There are some who imagine that they understand these matters quite well; but I warn you to beware of such a presumptuous thought and to remember that you must remain pupils of the Word. Satan is such an accomplished juggler that he can easily abolish the difference and make the Law force itself into the place of the Gospel, and *vice versa*. We often meet with people in their last agony who with a stricken conscience seize a few sayings which they suppose to be Gospel, while in reality they are Law, and thus forfeit the consolation of the Gospel; for instance, the statement in Matt. 19, 17: 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments'; likewise this one in Matt. 7, 21: 'Not every one that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.'" The devil approaches men who are in anguish of death and in their last hour seeks to pluck them away from the Gospel. When Christians are departing into eternity, they reflect whether they are worthy. They may review a multitude of texts and hit upon one like this: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Then their heart tells them: "You are not fit; you cannot be saved." You see, they cannot distinguish between Law and Gospel. Therefore it is good for you to be taught this art while you are young. But you must not think: "I have been thoroughly grounded in this doctrine, and when I shall be in anguish of death, I shall simply cling to what I have been taught." Ah, yes; if that were within our power! But the devil will throw you into such confusion that you will not find a way of escape out of your dilemma. Nor must you think: "Oh, I am still young." Does not God frequently snatch one away in the flower of his youth in order to impress upon others how necessary it is for everybody to consider that he, too, must die?

Luther continues: "By tests like those cited the hearts of men are often led astray, so that they cannot think of anything except of what they have done and should have done; likewise, of what God commands and forbids. While keeping their minds on these things, they forget all that Christ has done and God has promised to do through Christ. Therefore no one should be so presumptuous as to imagine that he has attained to perfection in this matter." You remember that the point we are discussing now is how

a preacher, in as far as he is a Christian, is to divide Law and Gospel. For he must be a Christian, or else he ought not to be a preacher. Now, any one who fails to attain the knowledge of, and the practical ability to apply, this distinction is still a heathen or a Jew. The *forma* of a Christian, — that which makes a person a Christian — is that he knows how to seek his salvation in Christ and thus to escape the Law.

I wish to cite *Luther* once more. He writes (St. L. Ed. IX, 161): "In your tribulations you will become aware that the Gospel is a rare guest in men's consciences, while the Law is their daily and familiar companion. For man has by nature the knowledge of the Law." Unless a person learns this by experience, he will not learn it at all. If you are Christians, you will admit that you are far oftener troubled and worried than comforted. When you feel the comfort of the Gospel in your heart, that is a glimpse of the light that may come to you on a certain day; but then several days may pass when you will not catch that glimpse again. Always keep this reflection present: "For such poor sinners as I am the Gospel — the sweet Gospel — has been provided. I have forgiveness of sins through Christ."

Luther proceeds: "There is a time to die, and there is a time to live; there is a time for hearing the Law, and there is a time to be unconcerned about the Law; there is a time to hear the Gospel, and there is a time to be unconcerned about the Gospel. At this moment let the Law begone and let the Gospel come; for that is not the time to hear the Law, but the Gospel. However, how about this: You have not done any good; on the contrary, you have committed grievous sins? I admit that, but I have forgiveness of sins through Christ, for whose sake all my sins have been remitted. However, while the conscience is not engaged in this conflict, while you are obliged to discharge the ordinary functions of your office, at a time when you must act as a minister of the Word, a magistrate, a husband, a teacher, a pupil, etc., it is not in season to hear the Gospel, but the Law. At such a time you are to perform the duties of your profession," etc.

Accordingly, when you are called upon to do what is right in public, that is not the time to hear the Gospel, but the Law, and to remember your calling or profession. Whenever your relation to God is not under review, you must act in accordance with the Law, yet not like a slave, but like a child.

SEVENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(November 7, 1884.)

Fourteen days ago I communicated to you Luther's statement that without illumination by the Holy Spirit no person can properly distinguish the Law from the Gospel and that Luther has declared himself to be nothing but a feeble novice in this exalted and glorious art. My intention was not at all to cast you down and to discourage you. On the one hand, I wanted to cure those among you of their egregious self-conceit who have hitherto imagined that distinguishing Law and Gospel is quite an easy accomplishment. On the other hand, I wanted to relieve the pusillanimous among you and encourage those who may be reasoning thus: "Well, if it was such a difficult task for Luther to acquire this art, I shall be much less capable of acquiring it."

If you will consider that it is only in the school of the Holy Spirit and of genuine Christian experience that the proper distinction between Law and Gospel is learned, you can easily perceive how it is possible that a person may be a graduate of all schools in existence and yet not have acquired this art. He must not think that the difficulties which have been noted in connection with this matter relate only to poorly gifted youths; they relate also to those highly endowed and well informed. As a matter of fact, the better gifts and the greater knowledge a person possesses, the more easily he is tempted to self-esteem and self-reliance, the more he is apt to take matters easy, and, accordingly, he never arrives at the knowledge of the proper connection and the proper distinction of these doctrines.

Chrysostom, you remember, was a great scholar and an excellent orator. His original name was John, but because of his oratorical gifts he was called "the Golden-mouthed" (= Chrysostom). He seemed to have the gift to do with his audience anything he pleased. He was equally able to make them glad or sad, to exult or to wail, weep, and sob, according to his pleasure. And yet the good man, upon the whole, accomplished little because he was poor in distinguishing the Law from the Gospel, habitually mingling the one doctrine with the other.

Andrew Osiander furnishes another instance. He was a scholar with a keen intellect and an orator without a peer. At first he divided Law and Gospel in a very excellent manner. The draft which he sketched for the Augsburg Confession shows this. That

was his status as long as he was pleased to be Luther's pupil. However, he became proud of his splendid gifts and great knowledge, and at length he was utterly blinded in his judgment of himself. The consequence was that he got to commingle Law and Gospel in the most horrible fashion. He taught that a person becomes righteous in the sight of God, not by the righteousness which Christ, by His bitter suffering and death, has acquired for him, but by the indwelling of Christ with His essential divine righteousness in a person. Oh, do heed these warning examples!

Now, since a person under the pedagogy of the Holy Spirit learns rightly to distinguish the Law from the Gospel and to divide both, it follows that genuine Christians, be they never so feeble otherwise, as long as they have duly experienced the force of the Law and the consolation of the Gospel or the power of faith, are best prepared to apply to others what they have experienced in their own lives. Accordingly, ministers who may be classed among the poorest intellectually not infrequently are found to be the best preachers. There is no doubt that in the past ages many a simple, poor presbyter of no renown, in a small rural parish, divided Law and Gospel better than Chrysostom, the great orator in the metropolis of Constantinople, better than the philosophically trained Clement of Alexandria, better than that universal scholar Origen.

We observe the same phenomenon at the time of the Reformation. A simple parson like Cordatus, the intimate friend of Luther, unquestionably divided Law and Gospel a thousand times better than Melanchthon, called Preceptor of All Germany. This view will not be altered by the fact that Melanchthon tried to ridicule Cordatus by calling him *Quadratus,* a clumsy quadruped, because he had unmasked Melanchthon when the latter had begun to err in the doctrine regarding man's free will.

Accordingly, though it is a difficult achievement to divide Law and Gospel, he will best learn this art who has attained to the love of his Lord Jesus and has experienced the power of the Law and the Gospel.

This evening we are to consider that also for *theologians as such* the proper distinction between Law and Gospel is the highest and most difficult art and that everything else that a theologian must know is of less value than this art.

We read 2 Tim. 2, 15: *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.* The apostle's admonition to Timothy to

study indicates — does it not? — that dividing Law and Gospel properly is a great, difficult art.

Our Lord declares, Luke 12, 42—44: *Who, then, is that faithful and wise steward whom his lord shall make ruler over his household to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.* What the Lord in this text terms a great achievement is not the mere recital of the Word of God, or, to stick to the simile, the apportioning of some food to every member of the household, but this, that every one is given his due portion at the proper time, that each one is treated as his spiritual condition requires. This must be done at the proper time. It is a poor steward that gives the servants something now and then allows a long time to pass before he gives them something again and is unconcerned about the quantity of food that he must provide and about the proper time to serve it. The lesson conveyed by this simile is this: A preacher must be well versed in the art of ministering to each in season exactly what he needs, either the Law or the Gospel.

That this art can be learned only from the Holy Spirit we see from 2 Cor. 2, 16: *Who is sufficient for these things?* and chap. 3, 4—6: *Such trust have we through Christ to God-ward. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit.* From God alone the apostle expects his qualification for this high and difficult art. By the term *letter* he understands the Law; by *spirit,* the Gospel. We have here a plain testimony that both must be preached alongside of one another. The ability to do this no person possesses by nature; God must bestow it upon him. For this reason such a person must be divorced from the spirit of the world. No one still lugging with him the spirit of the world can ever properly learn how to make this distinction. For the Spirit of God does not dwell in a heart in which the spirit of the world still claims a place. That is the reason why the world cannot receive the Spirit. Accordingly, any one desiring to become a genuine δόκιμος, a servant approved to the Lord, must first become a Christian. He may possibly make a correct presentation of every dogma, but that is not sufficient. He must understand, besides, to minister to each soul in his audience the very thing it

needs. This is possible when the preacher is able to make an exact investigation of the condition of each soul. True, that is very difficult, just as the diagnosis is the most difficult part of a physician's skill. Using the quick and sharp Word of God is not all that you have to do. With this sharp sword you may very easily slay souls if you do not minister to their necessities.

Accordingly, a minister must be able to distinguish whether he is facing a hypocrite or a true Christian; a person still spiritually dead or one that has already been roused from his sleep of sin; one who is tempted by the devil and his own flesh or one who has been given over to the rule of the devil because of his malice. An inexperienced person readily takes a hypocrite for a true Christian, etc.

Preach so that every hearer feels: "He means me. He has painted the hypocrite exactly as I am." Again, the pastor may have described a person afflicted with temptation so plainly that the actual victim of a temptation has to admit: "That is my condition." The penitent person must soon feel while listening to the pastor: "That comfort is meant for me; I am to appropriate it." The alarmed soul must be led to think: "Oh, that is a sweet message; that is for me!" Yea, the impenitent, too, must be made to acknowledge: "The preacher has painted my exact portrait."

Accordingly, the preacher must understand how to depict accurately the inward condition of every one of his hearers. A mere objective presentation of the various doctrines is not sufficient to this end. A person may be orthodox, may have apperceived the pure doctrine, but he is not in personal communion with God, has not yet settled his account with God, has not yet attained to the assurance that his debt of sins has been remitted. How can such a person prepare a Christian sermon? Here is where the saying which was current among the pagans applies: *Pectus facit disertum,* that is, true oratory is a matter of the heart. Indeed, the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is properly learned only in the school of the Holy Spirit, in tribulation. That is what makes people love to read Luther's sermons. At the start his sermons do not please. But when people conquer their dislike (perhaps because the pastor had pronounced a book of Luther's sermons a precious book), they are finally so highly pleased with it that they want no other. It is, indeed, a delight to read Luther's sermons. One finds his own likeness on every page. At first they give one a terrible fright, stunning and stupefying one. At first Luther hurls

one into the abyss, but, when that has been done, he says, "Do you believe this?" Answer, "Yes." Then Luther says, "Very well, you may come up again." Luther's sermons are full of thunder and lightning, but these are speedily followed by the soft blowing of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel. It is impossible for the reader to resist; he cannot but admit that this is good, nourishing bread, the proper daily food for his soul. Luther does not point a long way; he does not propound many teachings how to get out of the abyss. As soon as he has made a person see that he is a poor sinner, he says to him: "Quit your despair; the grace of Christ is greater than the sins of the whole world." At all times, Luther preaches the Law and the Gospel alongside of each other in such a manner that the Law is given an illumination by the Gospel which makes the former much more terrible, while the sweetness and the rich comfort of the Gospel is greatly increased by the Law, *i. e.*, by contrast. That is what you will have to learn from our dear father Luther. That will make people listen to you. That will rouse their interest; they will get the impression that you want to lift them out of perdition this very hour and send them away from church rejoicing.

But a preacher must exercise great care lest he say something wrong. Again and again he must go over his sermon and consider whether everything is quite as it should be, that there is nothing in the sermon contrary to either the Law or the Gospel. For instance, it would be incorrect to say: "As long as a person is afraid of dying, he is not a child of God." That is a great falsehood. True, it is correct to say that Christians are not afraid to appear before God, but they still dread becoming a prey to corruption and decomposition in the grave, etc. A statement of that kind must promptly be struck from the sermon.

Again, young ministers who are very desirous of achieving results and accomplishing something — may there be many of them! — love to speak before worldlings of the blessed state of being a Christian. However, not infrequently they exceed the bounds of propriety by saying: "Oh, those poor worldly people! They are without any joys, any peace, any rest!" That is not true at all. When worldly people hear a statement of that kind, they think: "That preacher is a simpleton, to be sure. What does he know about us? We have joy, peace, and quiet indeed." The preacher must express himself differently; he must admit that worldly people have their delights and enjoyments, but at the same

time he must remind them that they are frequently visited with such thoughts as these: "What if it were true what the Christians are saying? If they are right, what will be my fate?" Amidst their riotous orgies the thought of death suddenly looms like a specter and turns their joys to bitterness. If the preacher addresses them thus, he forces them to acknowledge: "That man can give you a true picture of yourself!"

Again, if you were to portray Christians as being exceedingly happy people, utterly without worry and trouble of any kind, you would again not paint a true picture. Christians are in far greater anxiety, worry, and tribulation than worldly people. Yet, spite of all this, the Christian is far happier than worldly men. If God were to come this night and demand his soul from him, he would say, "Praise God! My race is run; soon I shall be with my Savior." Amidst his tribulations this is his reflection: "Surely, it will not be long before I shall come home to my Father in heaven, and all the misery and woe of this earth will be past and forgotten." While Christians are weeping, the angels are rejoicing over them. While Christians are in anguish of soul and terror, God is cherishing the most cordial thoughts of love for them and calls them His beloved children. These are a few instances that serve to illustrate the danger of exceeding the limits of propriety, even with the best intention.

Another point that you will have to bear in mind while writing your sermons is not to say anything that may be misunderstood. For instance, this statement is liable to misconstruction: "Any one sinning purposely and knowingly falls from grace." For true Christians occasionally sin with intent and knowledge, namely, when they are, so to speak, *rushed* by a sinful passion from within or by allurements from without. Such sins are called hasty sins. Here is one with a wrathful temper, though, as a rule, amiable. Something crosses his path, and suddenly he boils over in angry speech. In such a case the Spirit of God will administer to the culprit this rebuke: "Behold, what a miserable creature thou art!" and prompt him to ask God's forgiveness. It is true, indeed, that a Christian sinning intentionally grieves the Spirit of God every time. The Holy Spirit will not take part in his action. Regarding this matter we must therefore speak to people in this manner: "You are treading on dangerous ground. The Holy Spirit will withdraw from you, and instead of making progress in your Christianity, you will be thrown back. If you do not repent and remain genuinely penitent, this sin may be your ruin."

Equally liable to misconstruction would be this statement: "Good works are not necessary; only faith." It would be correct to say: "Good works are not necessary to obtain salvation." But I cannot remain on the way to heaven if I am doing no good works. Besides, God has certainly commanded good works; He demands that we do good works.

The following statement, too, would be liable to be misunderstood: "Sin does not harm a Christian." True, a sin committed because of the frailty of our flesh does not immediately hurl the doer into disfavor with God; nevertheless it *harms* him. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," says Paul; but he does not say: "There is nothing sinful to them." — In fine, you cannot be too careful in your preaching.

It is faulty, likewise, not to explain some points at greater length. Here is an instance: Aegidius Hunnius, during his college years, on a certain occasion heard this statement during a service at church: "However, there is a sin that cannot be forgiven. That is the sin against the Holy Ghost." Like a dagger that statement entered the young student's heart. He promptly imagined that he had committed that sin. The result was that he planned suicide. He remembered that the Holy Spirit had indeed many a time knocked at the door of his heart for admission while he had been listening to the sermon, but in his youthful light-heartedness he had allowed these invitations to pass out of his mind. In a miraculous manner, however, God rescued him from his great anguish of conscience. Approaching his seat in the classroom one day, he found a leaf torn from a precious book of devotion written by Magister Spangenberg. It contained remarks about this very sin against the Holy Ghost, this statement in particular, that a person, after committing this sin, is *unwilling to repent until his death.* That saved Hunnius. And it is due to the fact that even in his youth he had to pass through such great tribulations that he became the great theologian he was.

The difficulty of properly dividing Law and Gospel is still greater in the pastor's private ministrations to individuals. In the pulpit he may say sundry things, hoping that they will strike home. But when people seek his pastoral counsel, he is confronted with a far greater difficulty. He will soon observe which of his callers is a Christian, which not. This is not saying that the pastor may not be deceived by the pious mien and manners of a hypocrite. However, if he can rightly divide Law and Gospel, his callers may have deceived him, but it is their own fault if they applied the

wrong teaching to themselves. A fearful responsibility is assumed by the pastor only in case he himself is to blame if his people misunderstand him. If people act like Christians, only to deceive me, they deceive themselves rather than me. A pastor must treat any person as a Christian when he appears to be one, and *vice versa*.

However, not all unchristians are alike. One is a crass and scurrilous irreligionist and a scorner of the Bible; another is orthodox and possesses the dead faith of the intellect only. The minister — unless he is himself a slave of sin and incapable of forming a judgment of the person before him — recognizes in the latter a person spiritually blind and still in the bonds of spiritual death. Now, if an unchristian has become truly alarmed and filled with an unnamed dread, though he is still unbroken, the pastor must say to himself: "This person must first be crushed." Some are addicted to a vice, others are self-righteous. To discover to which class these various unconverted persons belong and to apply the proper medicine to them, that is the very difficulty of which I am speaking. My object is to convince you that a preacher can be truly fitted out for his calling only by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, the greatest difficulty is encountered in dealing with true Christians according to their particular spiritual condition. One has a weak, another a strong faith; one is cheerful, another sorrowful; one is sluggish, another burning with zeal; one has only little spiritual knowledge, another is deeply grounded in the truth.

A word in conclusion. In order that a pastor may correctly judge and treat people, it is of the utmost importance for him to understand temperaments. When observing a fault of temperament, my intellectual vision must not become blind to a person's good traits. For instance, a person of sanguine disposition is always of good cheer, never troubled with gloomy thoughts, and yet he may not be a Christian. These traits are inborn in him. Now, if you discover the sanguine temperament in a certain person and he becomes sad when you preach the Law to him, you may take it for granted that the Word has taken effect in his soul. When you meet a person of a melancholy disposition and observe that he is habitually sad and of an austere mien, you must not forthwith conclude that he is sorrowing over his sins. But when he suddenly becomes lively while you proclaim the Gospel to him and you observe something in his demeanor contrary to his natural temperament, you may safely conclude that the Gospel has taken effect in him.

Or you may meet with a phlegmatic person, who loves his ease and hates to be disturbed in his reflections. Do not think when you have calmed such a person that you have done so by preaching the Gospel. Or, lastly, you may have to deal with a person of choleric disposition. When he becomes despondent under your ministration, you may be assured that it was through the effect which God's Word had upon him.

When listening to the sermons of inexperienced preachers, you may not be able to say that they have perverted either the Law or the Gospel, but you will frequently have to say that Law and Gospel have been merged the one into the other. That the proper division of Law and Gospel is the highest art of theologians, Luther testifies in his *Sermon on the Distinction between the Law and the Gospel* (St. L. Ed. IX, 806f.): "To express in words that the Law is a different kind of teaching than the Gospel; that is something everybody can do. But to reduce this distinction to practise and make it operative, that is a huge task. St. Jerome, among others, has written a great deal concerning this matter, but he talks like a blind man about colors."

Luther treated learned men with great respect. He called Erasmus a valuable man because he had caused the study of the languages to flourish; but he did not call him a doctor of Holy Writ. Why not? Because *this one* art Erasmus did not understand. A person may be most highly gifted and may have been trained fifty years for the sacred office of the ministry, and still he will not properly distinguish between the Law and the Gospel if he has not received the Holy Spirit. Here is where the theologian meets his Scylla and Charybdis. In either direction he can lead souls to perdition and become guilty of a grievous offense to poor Christians.

In his comment on Gal. 2, 14 Luther says (St. L. Ed. IX, 159): "Let any one who knows well how to distinguish the Law from the Gospel thank our Lord God; for he can easily pass for a theologian. In my tribulations I did not, alas! understand this as well as I should have." An ordinary preacher may be an excellent theologian, and another, though he has studied all the languages, and God knows what other things besides, may not even be worthy of the name of theologian. Not man, but God, makes theologians. If you think that this statement goes too far, you are still blind. If you had had any experience, you would admit that this is a very difficult art.

EIGHTH EVENING LECTURE.

(November 14, 1884.)

If the Holy Scriptures were really so obscure a book that the meaning of all those passages which form the basis of articles of the Christian Creed could not be definitely ascertained, and if, as a result of this, we should have to acknowledge that without some other authority it would be impossible to decide which of two or several interpretations of Scripture-passages is the only correct one, — if these conditions, I say, were true, the Scriptures could not be the Word of God. How could a book that leaves us groping in darkness and uncertainty regarding its essential contents serve as a revelation? The old Jewish Bible scholars of the Middle Ages, in particular, declared that the literal meaning of the Scriptures was, indeed, plain, but that there was a secret meaning of Scripture that is of the highest importance, and this secret meaning could not be explored without the aid of the Cabala. For instance, they pointed out that in the first as well as in the last verse of the Hebrew text the letter *aleph* occurs six times. Now, an ordinary person, they say, cannot know why that is so, but the Cabala gives the explanation, *viz.*, that the world is to last six thousand years.

This claim is, of course, quite absurd. However, even within the Christian Church, in the Papacy, the teaching is current that the Scriptures are so obscure that you can scarcely understand a single passage in them; at any rate, very many important teachings of the Christian religion, it is asserted, cannot be substantiated from Scripture. To this end the traditions of the Church are said to be absolutely necessary. This claim of the papists is evidence of their blindness. To them applies what Paul says 2 Cor. 4, 3: "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

Luther is right when he says in his exposition of Ps. 37 (St. L. Ed. V, 335): "There is not a plainer book on earth than the Holy Scriptures. It is, in comparison with all other books, what the sun is compared with all other luminaries. The papists are giving us their twaddle about the Scriptures for the sole purpose of leading us away from the Scriptures and raising up themselves as masters over us in order to force us to believe their preaching of dreams. It is an abomination, a disgraceful defamation of Holy Writ and the entire Christian Church, to say that the Holy Scriptures are obscure, that they are not clear enough to be understood by everybody and to enable everybody to teach and prove what he believes."

In his *Appeal to the Counselors of All Cities of Germany in*

Behalf of the Establishment and Maintenance of Christian Schools, Luther says (St. L. Ed. X, 473): "The sophists have claimed that the Scriptures are obscure, meaning that it is the very nature of the Word of God to be obscure and to speak in strange fashion. But they do not see that the whole trouble is caused by the *languages*. If we understood the languages, there would not be anything that has ever been spoken easier to understand than the Word of God. Of course, a Turk will talk obscure things to me because I do not know Turkish; but a Turkish child seven years old understands him readily."

Luther is entirely right. The Holy Scriptures are not only as perspicuous as the plainest writing of men, but they are much clearer, because they have been set down by the Holy Spirit, the Creator of the languages. It is therefore absolutely impossible to prove an error or even a contradiction in Scripture if you stick to its words. It is truth, then, what we express in our beautiful Communion hymn "Lord Jesus, Thou Art Truly Good," when we sing:

Firm as a rock Thy Word still stands,
Unshaken by the en'mies' bands,
Though they be e'er so cunning.

However, while the historico-grammatical meaning of Scripture can readily be opened up by any one who understands its language, it is impossible without the Holy Spirit for any one to understand the Holy Scriptures unto his salvation, no matter how great a linguist, how famous a philologist, how keen a logician he may be. The Apostle Paul declares, 1 Cor. 2, 14: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Again, the same apostle says, 1 Cor. 1, 23: "We preach Christ Crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness."

Now, the primary requisite for a salutary knowledge of the Holy Scriptures is the correct understanding of the distinction between the Law and the Gospel. The Bible is full of light to every one who has this knowledge. Wherever this knowledge is lacking, all Scripture remains a book sealed with seven seals.

We now proceed to

Thesis IV.

The true knowledge of the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is not only a glorious light, affording the correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures, but without this knowledge Scripture is and remains a sealed book.

Turning the leaves of the Holy Scriptures while still ignorant of the distinction between the Law and the Gospel, a person receives the impression that a great number of contradictions are contained in the Scriptures; in fact, the entire Scriptures seem to be made up of contradictions, worse than the Koran of the Turks. Now the Scriptures pronounce one blessed, now they condemn him. When the rich youth asked the Lord: "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" the Lord replied: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." When the jailer at Philippi addressed the identical question to Paul and Silas, he received this answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." On the one hand, we read in Hab. 2, 4: "The just shall live by his faith"; on the other hand, we note that John in his First Epistle, chap. 3, 7, says: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." Over and against this the Apostle Paul declares: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." On the one hand, we note that Scripture declares God has no pleasure in sinners; on the other hand, we find that it states: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." In one place Paul cries: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," and Ps. 5, 4 we read: "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with Thee"; in another place we hear Peter saying: "Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you." On the one hand, we are told that all the world is under the wrath of God; on the other hand, we read: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Another remarkable passage is 1 Cor. 6, 9—11, where the apostle first makes this statement: "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God," and then adds: "And such were some of you. But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Must not a person who knows nothing of the distinction between the Law and the Gospel be swallowed up in utter darkness when reading all this? Must he not indignantly cry out: "What? That is to be God's Word? A book full of such contradictions?"

For the situation is not this, that the Old Testament reveals

a wrathful, the New Testament a gracious God, or that the Old Testament teaches salvation by a person's own works, the New Testament, by faith. No; we find both teachings in the Old as well as in the New Testament. But the moment we learn to know the distinction between the Law and the Gospel, it is as if the sun were rising upon the Scriptures, and we behold all the contents of the Scriptures in the most beautiful harmony. We see that the Law was not revealed to us to put that notion into our heads that we can become righteous by it, but to teach us that we are utterly unable to fulfil the Law. When we have learned this, we shall know what a sweet message, what a glorious doctrine, the Gospel is and shall receive it with exuberant joy.

The history of the Church, too, illustrates the importance of understanding this distinction. Corruption entered the Church when Law and Gospel began to be confounded. A perusal of the writings of the Church Fathers soon reveals the cause of the Church's misery in those early days: people did not know how to distinguish properly between Law and Gospel. Up to the sixth century we still find glorious testimonies exhibiting this distinction, but from that time on we notice that this light is growing dim and that the distinction is gradually forgotten.

An instance illustrating this fact is the monastic life, which is seen to rise to ever greater distinction. The reply of the Lord to the rich young man was understood as showing what is necessary for a person's salvation. The preachers in those days proclaimed the Law to people to whom they should have preached the Gospel.

Following the course of history to the time when the Papacy had become dominant, we find that the knowledge of this distinction became utterly extinct; a truly abysmal darkness settled upon the Church, and sheer paganism and idolatry gained their way into it.

Remember the agonies of our dear Luther! Considering the darkness which reigned in his day, we must say that, compared with others he had acquired a great deal of knowledge at the beginning of his career, but he did not know how to distinguish the Law from the Gospel. Oh, the toil and torments he had to undergo! His self-castigation and fasting brought him to the point of death. The most crushing, the most appalling statement in his estimation at that time was this, that the righteousness which is valid in the sight of God is revealed in the Gospel. "Alas!" he mused, "what a woeful state of affairs! First we are approached by the Law, which demands of us that we fulfil it; and now, in addition, we

are to be made righteous by obeying the Gospel!" Luther confesses that there were times in his life when he was harassed with blasphemous thoughts. Suddenly a new light shone in upon him, showing him of what kind of righteousness the Gospel is speaking. He relates that from that moment he began to run through the whole Scriptures in an endeavor to obtain a clear understanding as to which portions of the Scriptures are Law and which Gospel. He says that he pried into every book in the Bible, and now all its parts became clear to him. The birth of the Reformer dates from the moment when Luther understood this distinction. The tremendous success of his public activity, moreover, is due to the same cause. By his new knowledge Luther liberated the poor people from the misery into which they had been driven by the Law-preaching of their priests.

You are preparing to become pastors, my friends. Do you not sense the immense importance of this matter for your future vocation? Some one who is in anguish and distress will come to you. In every instance the cause of such anguish of soul will be that the Law has taken effect in your parishioner, and it does not occur to him that he can be saved by the Gospel. He does not think of that while he wails: "Alas! I am a poor sinner; I am worthy of damnation," etc. To such a person you must say: "You are indeed a lost and condemned creature. But the passage of Scripture which has told you that is Law. There is, however, another teaching in Scripture. The Law has done its work in you; by the Law is to come the knowledge of sin. You must now quit Sinai and go to Golgotha. See yonder your Savior, bleeding and dying for you!" Not until you enter the ministry, will you realize the great importance of the distinction between Law and Gospel and the fact that only the knowledge of this distinction, and nothing else, will make you capable to discharge the office that is to save the world. The matter of paramount importance, of course, will always be this, that you have experienced this distinction upon yourself. I am not referring to those among you who have never been in anguish over their sins, who consider themselves orthodox because they have been reared in Christian homes. I am referring to those who are concerned about their salvation. There will be moments when such of you will imagine that you are God's children. Again, there will be times when you think your sins have not been forgiven you. If on such occasions you desire genuine peace, it can come to you only through the knowledge of the distinction between Law and Gospel.

In the *Apology* of the Augsburg Confession (Mueller, p. 119; *Triglot Concordia,* p. 173) we read: "For rightly to understand the benefit of Christ and the great treasure of the Gospel (which Paul extols so greatly), we must separate as far as the heavens are from the earth the promise of God and the grace that is offered, on the one hand, from the Law, on the other." The Word of God may preach the Gospel to us with ever so great comfort, we shall nevertheless not obtain the peace it offers unless we know that Holy Writ contains also the Law, from which we have escaped and that, being lost and doomed sinners, we have embraced the Gospel. We may hit upon a comforting passage and say to ourselves: "Aye, I have the forgiveness of sins," and then we may strike another passage which makes us believe that we are lost, — all this because we do not know the distinction between Law and Gospel.

The *Formula of Concord,* in the Epitome (Mueller, p. 533; *Triglot Concordia,* p. 801), says: "We believe, teach, and confess that the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is to be maintained in the Church with great diligence as an especially brilliant light, by which, according to the admonition of St. Paul, the Word of God is rightly divided." This is repeated in the Declaration of Art. V (Mueller, p. 633; *Triglot Concordia,* p. 951) as follows: "As the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is a special brilliant light, which serves to the end that God's Word may be rightly divided and the Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles may be properly explained and understood, we must guard it with especial care in order that these two doctrines may not be mingled with one another or a Law be made out of the Gospel, whereby *the merit of Christ is obscured* and troubled consciences are *robbed of their comfort* which they otherwise have in the holy Gospel when it is preached genuinely and in its purity, and by which they can support themselves in their most grievous trials against the terrors of the Law." If these two doctrines are not kept separate, the merit of Christ is obscured; for when I am afraid of the threatening of the Law, I have forgotten Christ, who says to me: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. All ye that labor and are heavy laden, do but come, and you shall find rest unto your souls." These facts will not be rightly proclaimed by the preacher unless he has received an indelible impression of the distinction between the Law and the Gospel. Only he, moreover, can lie down and die in peace. The devil may whisper all manner of insinuations to him, but he will say to him: "Your charges against me are quite correct; but I have another

doctrine, which tells me something altogether different. I am glad that the Law has put me in such a woeful plight; for now I can relish the Gospel all the more."

At the conclusion of Art. V we read in the *Formula of Concord* (Mueller, p. 639; *Triglot Concordia,* p. 961): "Now, in order that both doctrines, that of the Law and that of the Gospel, be not mingled and confounded with one another, and what belongs to the one may not be ascribed to the other, whereby the merit and benefits of Christ are easily obscured and the Gospel is again turned into a doctrine of the Law, as has occurred in the Papacy, and thus Christians are deprived of the true comfort which they have in the Gospel against the terrors of the Law, and the door is again opened in the Church of God to the Papacy, therefore the true and proper distinction between the Law and Gospel must with all diligence be inculcated and preserved, and whatever gives occasion for confusion *inter legem et evangelium* [between the Law and the Gospel], that is, whereby the two doctrines, Law and Gospel, may be confounded and mingled into one doctrine, should be diligently prevented." — We, too, are in the great danger here sketched. Read the writings of those who claim to be the best preachers. They terrify, to be sure, but their incisiveness is due to the fact that they confound the Law with the Gospel. As a result, people who have read these writings are on their dying bed often harassed with doubts. Many a one among them dies with the thought in his heart: "I'll see whether God will receive me." Any one dying in such uncertainty does not depart in saving faith. Now, whose fault is it, at least in many instances? The preacher's.

However, the preacher must also be careful not to say that the Law has been abolished; for that is not true. The Law remains in force; it is not abrogated. But we have another message besides that of the Law. God does not say: "By the Law is righteousness," but: "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." Yea, we read in the Epistle to the Romans: "To him that . . . believeth on Him that justifieth *the ungodly,* his faith is counted for righteousness." Hence we are on the right way to salvation the moment we are convinced that we are ungodly.

Commenting on Gal. 3, 19, *Luther* says (St. L. Ed. IX, 415): "If the Gospel is not fundamentally and plainly set apart from the Law, it is impossible to keep the Christian doctrine *unadulterated.* Again, when this distinction has been correctly and firmly established, we can have a fine and correct knowledge of the

manner how, and by what means, we are to become righteous in the sight of God. Where this illuminating knowledge prevails, it is easy to distinguish faith from works, Christ from Moses, the Gospel from the Law of Moses and all other secular laws, statutes, and ordinances."

In conclusion, *Chemnitz* writes in his *Chapters on Theology* (*Loci Theologici*), in the chapter on Justification (fol. 206): "Paul states distinctly that the righteousness which is valid in the sight of God is revealed in the Gospel, apart from the Law. Hence the principal matter in this inquiry regarding justification is that the true and proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel be fixed and carefully maintained. . . . Is there any other light, besides the one furnished by the true distinction between the Law and the Gospel, that has so forcibly broken up the dense darkness of the Pope's dominion?" The darkness of the Papacy has not been dispelled by any other light than the appearance of the teaching that there is a distinction to be made between the Law and the Gospel. Great councils of the Church wanted to make an attempt at reforming the Church; mighty emperors had undertaken this task. What did they accomplish? Nothing. Matters went from bad to worse. What is the reason why a poor, miserable monk succeeded in this work? No doubt it was because he put the candlestick of this doctrine back in the holy place. He might have preached in ever so evangelical a fashion, Christians would not have been comforted. For the moment they would have come across the Law, they would have exclaimed: "Ah, I have been in error after all! I have to keep the commandments of God if I want to enter into life."

Here is the point where most of the reformers before the Reformation were at fault. Huss preached the Gospel exceedingly well, but he did not show his hearers the proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel. For that reason his work, his attempt at reformation, did not endure.

May God, then, who has kindled this light for us, preserve it unto us! I am thinking of you in particular when I say this. We, who are old, will soon be in our graves. The light began to shine once more in our time. See to it that it is not put out again. You are following a wrong track if you imagine that you have comprehended this whole teaching in these few hours. If this light is not carefully guarded, it will soon go out. For instance, we find that this light was still burning in the days when the earliest writings of the Church Fathers were composed. But in the writings of the ecclesiastical teachers who followed them no definite statement is

found regarding the distinction between the Law and the Gospel. That is the reason why the Papacy, in a later age, made such rapid headway. The same danger is now threatening us.

The principal passage of Scripture establishing our thesis is Rom. 10, 2—4: *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but* NOT ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE. *For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* To what ignorance of the Jews does the apostle refer in this passage when he says "not according to knowledge"? This: "They do not recognize the righteousness that is valid in the sight of God." That is their lack of understanding. They imagined they must be zealots in behalf of the Law; for as it was most assuredly God's Law, how might any one dare depart from it? If they had paid attention to Paul's preaching, they would soon have observed that Paul allowed the Law to remain in force. Seeing that, they would not have become enemies of the Gospel, and the dreadful darkness which settled upon them like the pall of night would have been dispelled.

NINTH EVENING LECTURE.

(November 21, 1884.)

The latest statistics of ethnologists figure the present population of the earth at 1,400 millions of human beings. Not quite 400 million of these, that is, not quite one-third of the race, profess faith in Christ as the only Savior. Verily, that is an appalling state of affairs, pitiful enough to draw tears from us. However, still more appalling and lamentable is the fact that of these 400 million nominal Christians nearly one-half are still followers of the Pope, the Antichrist. The mystery surrounding these shocking and depressing conditions is such that even sincere Christians dread looking with open eyes into this abyss of indescribable misery and wretchedness.

True, quite a number, in fact, the majority, of those who claim to be Lutherans refuse to believe that the Pope is the Antichrist and the Papacy the antichristian power. With the entire Church of the Reformation and in accord with the confessions of this Church the orthodox American Lutheran Church of our time still in full earnest maintains the position that the Pope is the

Antichrist. But that is, at best, regarded as an odd fancy of narrow-minded men, who refuse to keep step with the times. If you ask why this is so, I answer that it is chiefly because people no longer know what constitutes the Antichrist and the antichristian dominion. People say: "We admit that, especially in the Middle Ages, there were many Popes who were veritable abominations and, even in the view of Romish writers, were swallowed up by hell." It is admitted that many shocking abominations are still practised by the Papacy, but this is offset by the reminder that there is not a Church free from errors and even from Judases. It is furthermore admitted that the Papacy is propagating the most horrible heresies, but over against this the fact is stressed that even the Papacy holds strictly to the three Ecumenical Creeds. For at the opening session and solemn organization of the Council of Trent, in 1545, those three creeds were recited. Our attention is also called to the fact that the Popes believe the Bible of the Old and the New Testament to be the revealed Word of God, God to be triune, and Christ to be God and man in one person and the Savior of the world. We are told: "The papists confess, just as we do, their faith in a future resurrection of the dead, a last Judgment, before which all men will be cited, and a heaven and a hell. Far, then, from being the dominion of Antichrist," these people say, "the Papacy is rather a powerful dam shutting out the fearful deluge of unbelief that has come down on the Christian Church." People see the rule of Antichrist in pantheism, materialism, atheism, socialism, nihilism, anarchism, and other horrible isms to which the modern age has fallen heir. But why is it that from the aforementioned premises men will draw the conclusion that the Papacy is not the rule of Antichrist and the Pope not the veritable Antichrist? The chief reason is that people fail to consider what it means when the Pope claims to be the vicegerent of Christ on earth and the visible head of the entire Christian Church. In order to be this, he must, of course, profess many Christian doctrines. He has to put on a mask, otherwise Antichrist could not possibly exist in the midst of the Christian Church. Moreover, he has to declare war against the enemies of all religions and against the enemies of the Christian religion to support his claim of being the vicegerent of Christ. He knows that, when Christ falls, Antichrist, too, must fall. For when He falls whose vicegerent the Pope claims to be, there is an end of the vicegerency. When the Pope apparently fights for Christ and the Christian Church, he fights for himself and his dominion.

But the point of supreme importance is this: Passing by those societies which deny the Triune God and which are outside of the pale of the Christian Church, I find that the Pope is the only one in the entire Christian Church who is an outspoken enemy of the free grace of God in Christ, an enemy of the Gospel under the guise of the Christian religion and aping its institutions. We are led to a consideration of this fact by

Thesis V.

The first manner of confounding Law and Gospel is the one most easily recognized — and the grossest. It is adopted, for instance, by Papists, Socinians, and Rationalists and consists in this, that Christ is represented as a new Moses, or Lawgiver, and the Gospel turned into a doctrine of meritorious works, while at the same time those who teach that the Gospel is the message of the free grace of God in Christ are condemned and anathematized, as is done by the papists.

I offer two testimonies to show that the papists are doing what the thesis charges. Two months before Luther's death, as you know, the Council of Trent was opened. It was to heal the mortal wounds that had been dealt the Papacy by the Reformation of Luther and rebuild the Papacy.

In its fourth session, in a preamble to a decree, the Council says: "The most holy, ecumenical, and universal Council of Trent, lawfully convened in the Holy Spirit, . . . always bearing in mind to remove errors and to preserve in the Church the purity of the Gospel, *viz.*, that which was first promised by the holy prophets in their writings, then preached with His own mouth by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and then commanded to be preached to all creatures by His apostles, both as the source of all saving truth and *a moral norm*," etc.

This preamble does not sound so awful. We hear this vermin of antichristian iniquity speaking of the Gospel as containing the doctrines of salvation. However, they add immediately that the Gospel also prescribes morals. That is the interpretation they put on the intention of Christ when He said: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Mark 16, 15. They evidently do not intend to accept the Gospel in the true sense of the word. In the meaning in which they understand it, it is, at best, a law such as Moses proclaimed. Nor do they urge upon people only the commandments of God, but much more the command-

ments of their Church. They do not trouble a person who has transgressed the commandments of God; but if any one transgresses the commandments of their Church, for instance, if he has eaten meat on Friday, he is tortured until he acknowledges that he has committed a mortal sin.

In Canon 21, adopted at its sixth session, this synagog of Satan decrees: "If any one says that Christ Jesus has been given by God to men that He should be their Redeemer, in whom they are to trust, and not also their Lawgiver, whom they are to obey, let him be anathema." This decree overthrows the Christian religion completely. If Christ came into the world to publish new laws to us, we should feel like saying that He might as well have stayed in heaven. Moses had already given us so perfect a Law that we could not fulfil it. Now, if Christ had given us additional laws, that would have had to drive us to despair.

The very term *Gospel* contradicts this view of the papists. We know that Christ Himself has called His Word *Gospel;* for He says in Mark 16, 15: "Go ye into all the world and preach the *Gospel* to every creature." In order that the meaning which He connected with the word *Gospel* might be understood, He states the contents of the Gospel in these concrete terms: "He that believeth and is baptized," etc. If the teaching of Christ were a law, it would not be an *εὐαγγέλιον,* a glad tiding, but a sad tiding.

Reverting to the Old Testament, we see even there what the character of the teaching of Christ is. We read in Gen. 3, 15: "It [the Woman's Seed] shall bruise thy head." What is the import of these words? It is this: The Messiah, the Redeemer, the Savior is not to come for the purpose of telling us what we are to do, what works we are to perform in order to escape from the terrible dominion of darkness, sin, and death. These feats the Messiah is not going to leave for us to accomplish, but He will do all that Himself. "*He shall bruise the serpent's head,*" that means nothing else than this, that He shall destroy the kingdom of the devil. All that man has to do is to know that he has been redeemed, that he has been set free from his prison, that he has no more to do than to believe and accept this message and rejoice over it with all his heart. If the text were to read: "He shall save you," that would not be so comforting; or if it read: "You must believe in Him," we should be at a loss to know what is meant by this faith. This Protevangelium, this First Gospel in Genesis, was the fountain from which the believers in the Old Testament drew their comfort. It was important for them to know: "There is One coming who

will not only tell us what we must do to get to heaven. No, the Messiah will do all Himself to bring us there." Now that the rule of the devil has been destroyed, anything that I must do cannot come into consideration. If the devil's dominion is demolished, I am free. There is nothing for me to do but to *appropriate* this to myself. That is what Scripture means when it says, "Believe." That means, Claim as your own what Christ has acquired.

Many additional prophecies might be cited to prove the correctness of this interpretation. Let me call your attention only to one, which shows clearly what the doctrine of the Gospel really is. Jer. 31, 31—34 we read: *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which My covenant they brake, although I was an Husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.* A *new* covenant, then, God is going to make. Note this well. This covenant is not to be a legal covenant like the one which He established with Israel on Mount Sinai. The Messiah will not say: "You must be people of such and such character; your manner of living must be after this or that fashion; you must do such and such works." No such doctrine will be introduced by the Messiah. He writes His Law directly into the heart, so that a person living under Him is a law unto himself. He is not coerced by a force from without, but is urged from within. "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more," — these words state the reason for the preceding statement. They are a summary of the Gospel of Christ: forgiveness of sin by the free grace of God, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Any one, therefore, imagining that Christ is a new Lawgiver and has brought us new laws cancels the entire Christian religion. For he removes that by which the Christian religion differs from all other religions in the world. All other religions say to man: "You must become just so and so and do such and such works if you wish to go to heaven." Over against this the Christian religion

says: "You are a lost and condemned sinner; you cannot be your own Savior. But do not despair on that account. There is One who has acquired salvation for you. Christ has opened the portals of heaven to you and says to you: Come, for all things are ready. Come to the marriage of the Lamb." That is the reason, too, why Christ says: "I heal the sick, not them that are whole. I am come to seek and save that which was lost. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Everywhere in His conversation among men we see the Lord Jesus surrounded by sinners, and behind Him stand lurking the Pharisees. Sinners, hungering and thirsting, stand round about Him. He has won their hearts. Though the divine majesty shines forth from Him, they are not afraid to approach Him; they have confidence in Him. The Pharisees utter the bitter reproach: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." The Lord overhears the remark, and even if He had not heard it, He nevertheless would have known it. What does He do? He makes no apologies; He does not say: "I do not wish to have sinners, but only righteous people, about Me!" No, He confirms the truth of their statement, which by them was meant as a reproach, by continuing the censured action, as if He wished to say: "Yes, I want sinners about Me," and then proceeds to prove this by telling the parable of the Lost Sheep. The shepherd picks up the lost sheep, no matter how torn and bruised it is. He places it on his shoulder and, rejoicing, carries it to the sheepfold. The Lord explains His conduct also by the parable of the Lost Piece of Silver. The woman seeks her lost coin throughout the house, searching for it even in the dirt. When she has found it, she calls her friends, saying: "Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost." Lastly, the Lord adds the incomparably beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son. Practically the Lord says by telling these parables: "There you have My doctrine. I am come to seek and to save that which was lost."

If you take a survey of the entire life of Jesus, you behold Him going about, not like a proud philosopher, not like a moralist, surrounded by champions of virtuous endeavor, whom He teaches how to attain the highest degree of philosophic perfection. No, He goes about seeking lost sinners and does not hesitate to tell the proud Pharisees that harlots and publicans will enter the kingdom of heaven rather than they. Thus He shows us quite plainly what His Gospel really is.

All the apostles corroborate His teaching. John says in his gospel, chap. 1, 17: *The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* He places the Law over against grace and truth. I need not explain what grace is. When John speaks of the "truth" that has come, he views Jesus as saying: "I teach the essence of the things which were foreshadowed in the Old Testament. The Old Testament presented emblems; I bring realities." The entire Temple-service of the Levites was figurative. Christ actually brought what was typified in the Old Testament.

In chap. 3, 17 the same apostle says: *God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.* Quite plainly the thought that Christ came into the world to proclaim a new law is barred here. Had that been His object, He would have come to judge the world. For the Law passes judgment on sinners. However, God did not send his Son to pass judgment on the world, but to save the world through Him. By the term *world* the Lord refers to mankind in its apostate and lost condition, to the lost, accursed, and condemned sinners that make up the world. To these the Savior brings this blessed doctrine: "Though you have broken every commandment of God, do not despair; I am bringing you forgiveness and salvation here and hereafter."

In language so plain that it requires no comment the apostle states in Romans, chap. 1, 16. 17: *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

1 Tim. 1, 15 we read: *This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* In view of these plain passages, is it not a horrible teaching of the papists that what is called Gospel in the Scriptures according to them is nothing else than a new law?

In sundry other places of their confessions they explain their meaning more fully thus: Many laws were uttered by Christ of which Moses knew nothing; for instance, the law to love our enemies, the law not to seek private revenge, the law not to demand back what has been taken from us, etc. All these matters the papists declare to be "new laws." This is wrong; for even Moses has said: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might," Deut. 6, 5; and:

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," Lev. 19, 18. Now, Christ did not abrogate this law of Moses, but neither did He publish any new laws. He only opened up the spiritual meaning of the Law. Accordingly, He says in Matt. 5, 17: "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." That means that He did not come to issue new laws, but to fulfil the Law for us, so that we may share His fulfilment.

In its sixth session the Council of Trent passed this decree: "If any one says that men are made righteous solely through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ or solely through the forgiveness of sin, to the exclusion of the grace and love which by the Holy Spirit is poured out in their hearts and is inherent in them; or that the grace by which we are made righteous is nothing else than the favor of God, — let him be accursed. If any one says that the faith which makes men righteous is nothing else than trust in the divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is only this trust that makes us righteous, — let him be accursed. . . . If any one says that a justified person does not, by reason of the good *works* which are done by him through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, truly *merit* an increase of grace, eternal life, and the actual obtainment of eternal life, provided he dies in grace, — let him be accursed." Unless you are utterly blind and know nothing of the Christian religion, I believe that a plainer proof that the Pope is the Antichrist cannot be offered you.

Everywhere the papists set up the cross and make the sign of the cross; but that is sheer hypocrisy. They have the cross, but without its meaning in connection with Christ. Again and again we read that they call upon Mary to keep the ship of Peter from perishing. They do not readily say: "Jesus is our Fortress, our Rock," etc. Verily, the worst sects in the Christian Church are less harmful than the Pope. For all sects without exception admit that the only way in which a person may be saved is by faith in the grace of God in Christ Jesus. All sects, by their teaching, obscure the Gospel, but they do not, as the Pope does, anathematize and curse it. Inasmuch as all sects allow this thesis, that salvation is by the grace of God, through faith in Christ Jesus, to stand, they are incomparably superior to the Papacy. They are corrupted churches, but the Papacy is a false Church. Just as counterfeit money is no money, so the papal Church, being a false Church, is no Church. Compared with the corrupted sectarian churches,

the Papacy is a non-church, a denial of the Church of Christ. I am not speaking of the Roman Catholic, but of the papistic Church, the Church which submits to the Pope, accepts his decrees, and repeats his anathemas. This Church is the one which history knows as the *ecclesia maligna*, the malign, pernicious Church, and the synagog of Satan.

However, the objection is raised: Does not Christ say, Matt. 11, 28—30: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My *yoke* upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For *My yoke is easy, and My burden is light*"? Here we have it that Christ, too, lays a burden on His followers. Yea, the Romanists claim this yoke and burden of Christ, which they interpret to mean self-abnegation and cross-bearing, is much more grievous than the Law of Moses. Moses, they say, prohibited only gross outward acts. They think that the remark of Christ, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time," refers to Moses. What Christ really means to say is this: "Your elders have taught you by their traditions that you were keeping the Law when you refrain from the gross acts prohibited by the Law." And then He proceeds to expound the true meaning of the Law.

Regarding this matter, *Luther* writes in his *Glosses on the Gospel of Matthew* (St. L. Ed. VII, 143): "Those are greatly in error who interpret 'the yoke of Christ' in this passage [Matt. 11, 29. 30] to mean the so-called evangelical law, that is, commands issued by Christ." In the opinion of Romanists the Gospel and the evangelical law are synonymous. They also term it "the new law" (*nova lex*). Luther proceeds: "In expounding this text, the Sophists have been at great pains to show that the yoke of Christ is easier than the yoke of Moses, spite of their belief that Moses has prohibited merely the external act while Christ lays His injunction even on every useless word that men speak and on their whole heart." By their contention that the yoke of Moses had been easier for the reason stated, the Sophists to whom Luther refers meant to prove that in the Old Testament people were saved by the Law because that was not hard to keep. The law in the Gospel, they say, is easy only in so far as it has abolished circumcision and the ceremonial ordinances. But the yoke and the burden of which Christ speaks is nothing else than the cross which His followers bear from love of Him.

Luther continues: "Finally, these blind people arrived at the conclusion that the Law and the Gospel were related to one another

like the *excedentia* to the *excessa* [that which exceeds something to that which is exceeded], namely, this way: the Law is easier than the Gospel because it lays its injunctions, not on the heart, but on the hand, or the gross external act. On the other hand, the Gospel is easier than the Law in this respect, that it has done away with circumcision and the Mosaic ceremonies. That is indeed a blindness befitting people who despise the Gospel and refuse to read it. This is what they should have taught: The power of Christ is marvelous in His saints; for by faith in the hearts of these men, Christ changes death into laughter, punishment into joy, and hell into heaven. For those who believe in Him laugh to scorn all those ills which worldly and carnal minds dread and flee and abominate. *That* is what Christ calls a pleasant yoke and a light burden, namely, to bear the cross joyfully, even as Paul did, who says: 'We glory in tribulations also.' Rom. 5, 3."

The moment a person through genuine repentance attains to a living faith, he has become a blessed man: he has arrived at the very gate of heaven. When death comes, the doors are opened, and he enters. But since it is dangerous for a Christian to pass his days in ease in this present life, the Savior has taken the precaution of putting the cross upon him. Whenever a Christian professes his faith by word and deed, people become hostile to him. Even where this enmity is not manifested publicly, it is still noticeable and vexes him not a little. How many have had to lay down their lives for Christ! But how light is the burden of Christ compared with that of the Law! Feeling the burden of the Law, a person will groan: "Oh, I am the most miserable of men!" It makes him despondent and fills him with despair.

Some spend their lives subject neither to the Law nor to the Gospel. Well, they live like animals. But, alas for them when their eyes are opened after death! A Christian is able to rejoice in the hope that God will deliver him from the misery and suffering of this life. He can even here sing hallelujahs. The examples of the martyrs shows this. They did not go weeping and wailing to their execution, but met their martyr's fate with joy and exultation. In them the words of Christ were fulfilled: "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

I pray God that my addressing these talks to you may not be labor misspent. Do apply what I say to yourselves. To advance you in your Christianity is the paramount object of these evening lectures.

TENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(November 28, 1884.)

The most important resolution a person can make by the almighty grace of God is to become a true Christian. Yet this resolution cannot make him truly happy and save his soul if he is not in full earnest when forming this resolution. Many thousands have resolved to quit the world body and soul and to choose the narrow path of the children of God. They did this after they had quaffed the cup of the world's joys to the dregs. Many, after learning by some sad experience the truth of that Bible-passage: "Sin is a reproach to any people," Prov. 14, 34, have made up their minds to quit their sins, even their pet sins. Many thousands have been tormented with uncertainty day and night as to whether they were in a state of grace, whether they were accepted by God as His dear children, and whether their sins were forgiven. They have been filled with anguish when they asked themselves the question: "If I were to die to-day, would I be saved?" In this state of mind they have resolved to seek the grace of God and the forgiveness of their sins.

What has been the outcome? The majority of those who had formed this resolution did not carry it out. They postponed the execution days, weeks, months, years. Forming the resolution is as far as they got. Finally death overtook them, and they were lost forever.

Why was this? They were not in earnest when forming their resolution. True, God is so patient, kind, and gracious as to forgive Christians their sins of weakness and frailties daily and richly. But He does this only to those who are really in earnest about being Christians. When this earnestness is lacking, a person is not a true Christian.

Now, a situation similar to this obtains when a person resolves to become a servant of Christ, a minister of the Church of Christ and His Word. This, too, is a momentous resolution, but a gratifying one only when backed by earnest endeavor. When a person wants to become a servant of the Gospel, he must be so disposed towards his Lord Jesus Christ as to be able to say to Him: "My dear Lord Jesus, Thou art mine; therefore, I wish to be Thine. All that I possess, my body and my soul, my strength and my gifts, and all that I do, my entire life, shall be consecrated to Thee, to

Thee alone. Lay on me any burden Thou pleasest, I shall gladly bear it. Lead me anywhere, through sorrow or joy, through good fortune or misfortune, through shame or honor, through favor of men or their disfavor, grant me a long life, or should I die an early death, — I shall be satisfied with anything. Lead the way, and I shall follow." That is the sentiment which our dear Paul Gerhardt has expressed in one of his hymns: —

I cleave now and forever
To Christ, a member true;
My Head will leave me never,
Whate'er He passes through.
He treads the world beneath
His feet and conquers death
And hell and breaks sin's thrall;
I'm with Him through it all.

Such was the apostle's devotion from the moment when the Lord had appeared to him and had spoken to him. He relates himself that, when he had received the divine call to go and preach the Gospel of Christ among the heathen, he conferred not with flesh and blood, Gal. 1, 16, but obeyed promptly. Blessed Paul! His activity was favored with success beyond telling. And now he is with God; he has beheld his Savior face to face for more than eighteen hundred years and is praising and magnifying Him world without end.

O my dear friends, I know, you are all resolved to enter the holy ministry, in which you intend to serve Christ and His Church by preaching His saving Word. Oh, be in full earnest about it! If not, your resolution will come to naught. If God has tried to lead you to this resolve at an early time, but you refused to follow Him and stifled the voice of the Holy Spirit in your hearts, all those blessed moments of prompting from God will bear testimony against you at His throne. On the other hand, you are blessed men if you have carried out your resolution. You will never complain about the heartache and anguish and distress through which you had to pass. You will rather be full of joy on the day when the Lord will place His hand, with the nail-prints, on you and put the crown of glory on your head.

Now, then, what is your chief task when about to enter the sacred ministry? You are to proclaim to a world of sinners both Law and Gospel. You are to do this clearly, perfectly, and with a fervent spirit. This reflection leads us to the consideration of

Thesis VI.

In the second place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Law is not preached in its full sternness and the Gospel not in its full sweetness, when, on the contrary, Gospel elements are mingled with the Law and Law elements with the Gospel.

Our object is to meditate upon the distinction between Law and Gospel, and on the ever-present danger and harm of mingling the one with the other. In our last lecture we began our review of the various occasions on which this danger confronts us. However, the commingling of both doctrines occurs also when Gospel elements are mingled with the Law, and *vice versa.* Let us investigate what Scripture says regarding this matter. To begin with, what does it say concerning the Law? How does it show us that we must not mingle any evangelical ingredient into the Law?

The principal passage yielding us the desired information is Gal. 3, 11. 12: *But that no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith. And the Law is not of faith; but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.* A precious text! A person becomes righteous in the sight of God solely by faith. What conclusion must be drawn from this fact? This, that the Law cannot make any person righteous because it has not a word to say about justifying and saving faith. That information is found only in the Gospel. In other words, the Law has nothing to say about grace.

Rom. 4, 16 the apostle tells us: *Therefore it* [righteousness] *is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the Law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.* Faith is demanded of us, not in order that there might be at least some little work that we are to do, as otherwise there would be no difference between those who go to hell and those who go to heaven. No; righteousness is of faith in order that it may be of grace. Both statements are identical. When I say: "A person becomes righteous in the sight of God by faith," I mean to say: "He becomes righteous gratuitously, by grace, by God's making righteousness a gift to him." Nothing is demanded of the person; he is only told: "Stretch out your hand, and you have it." Just that is what faith is — reaching out the hand. Suppose a person had never heard a word concerning faith and, on being told the Gospel, would rejoice, accept it, put his confidence in it, and draw comfort from it, that person would have the true, genuine faith, although he may not have heard a word concerning faith.

No Gospel element, then, must be mingled with the Law. Any one expounding the Law shamefully perverts it by injecting into it grace, the grace, loving-kindness, and patience of God, who forgives sin. He acts like a sick-nurse, who fetches sugar to sweeten the bitter medicine, which the patient dislikes. What is the result? Why, the medicine does not take effect, and the patient remains feverish. In order that it might retain its strength the medicine should not have been sweetened. A preacher must proclaim the Law in such a manner that there remains in it nothing pleasant to lost and condemned sinners. Every sweet ingredient injected into the Law is poison; it renders this heavenly medicine ineffective, neutralizes its operation.

Matt. 5, 17—19 the Lord says: *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* When preaching the Law, you must ever bear in mind that the Law makes no concessions. That is utterly beside the character of the Law; it only makes demands. The Law says: "You must do this; if you fail to do it, you have no recourse to the patience, loving-kindness, and long-suffering of God; you will have to go to perdition for your wrong-doing." To make this point quite plain to us, the Lord says: "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." That does not mean, he shall have the lowest place assigned him in heaven, but he does not belong in the kingdom of heaven at all.

Gal. 3, 10 Paul writes: *For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are in the Book of the Law to do them.* If you would direct men to do good works and for their comfort add a remark like this: "You should, indeed, be perfect; however, God does not demand the impossible from us. Do what you can in your weakness; only be sincere in your intention!" — I say, if you would speak thus, you would be preaching a damnable doctrine; for that is a shameful corruption of the Law. God never spoke like that from Sinai.

Rom. 7, 14 the same apostle writes: *We know that the Law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.* When a minister preaches the Law, he must by all means bear in mind that the Law is spiritual; it works on the spirit, not on some member of the body; it is directed to the spirit in man, to his will, heart, and affections. That is the way it operates in every instance. When the Law says: "Thou shalt not kill," that sounds as if it applied only to the hand. But it applies to the heart, as we can see from the Ninth and the Tenth Commandment, which prohibit evil desires of the heart.

A sermon on the Law which you deliver from your pulpit, to be a proper preaching of the Law, must measure up to these requirements: There is to be no ranting about abominable vices that may be rampant in the congregation. Continual ranting will prove useless. People may quit the practises that have been reproved, but in two weeks they will have relapsed into their old ways. You must, indeed, testify with great earnestness against transgressions of God's commandments, but you must also tell the people: "Even if you were to quit your habitual cursing, swearing, and the like, that would not make you Christians. You might go to perdition for all that. God is concerned about the attitude of your heart." You may explain this matter with the utmost composure, but you must state it quite plainly.

Let me illustrate. You may say: "Listen; when God says: 'Thou shalt not kill,' that does not mean that you are no murderers when your hand has slain no one, when you have not assaulted any one like a highway robber, nor put his life in jeopardy. Do not think that you have kept the Fifth Commandment if you have refrained from such outward acts. By no means; the Law aims at the heart, at the spirit in man." If you say merely in passing: "The Law is spiritual," the people will not catch the drift of your speech. You must explain this matter to them quite thoroughly. If you do this, you will be handling a sharp knife that cuts into the life of people, and your hearers will go home dazed. From the effect of your preaching they will go down on their knees at home and make this self-confession: "I am not as God would have me be. I shall have to become a different person."

Rom. 3, 20 we read: *By the Law is the knowledge of sin.* God does not tell you to preach the Law in order thereby to make men godly. The Law makes no one godly; but when it begins to produce its proper effects, the person who is feeling its power begins

to fume and rage against God. He hates the preacher who has shouted the Law into his heart, and he feels that he cannot slip off its coils. Where this has happened, you may hear people say: "We shall never again go to that church. Why, that preacher strikes terror into my soul. I prefer to attend the services of the Rev. So-and-so. He makes you feel good. While listening to him, you discover what a good man you really are." Alas! in eternity these people will wish to take revenge on the preacher that preached them into perdition.

There was nothing pleasant, nothing comforting, at Sinai. On the previous day, Moses had announced to the people that God was going to come to them. He did come with thunder and lightning. At early dawn a terrible tempest swept up from the horizon. Finally, the mountain began to quake, and the people were thrown into a still greater fright by this trembling of the mountain. Flames of fire shot skyward; dense clouds of smoke began to form. Suddenly a loud trumpet began to blare terribly, hurling its echoes like thunderclaps through the valleys that start from the sides of mountain and causing every one to shake with dread. But the climax of this terrible phenomenon came when the people heard the voice of Jehovah reciting to them the Ten Commandments with their regular refrain of Thou shalt! Thou shalt! Thou shalt! Moreover, the Speaker tells them: "I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," etc. Ex. 20, 5. Everywhere in the camp of Israel people went to pieces from dread and fright.

Do you think that the coming of this terrible tempest just on that day was an accident? Did not Moses have to set up a barrier around the mountain already on the preceding day lest anybody approach the mountain? Did he not issue a warning to the people telling them that they would drop dead if they crossed the barrier? In the wild tumult of the next day the people understood the truth of the warning; for no one could have come out alive from that fearful commotion. Only Moses was permitted to approach the mountain, under the protecting hand of God.

By this spectacle God has indicated to us how we are to preach the Law. True, we cannot reproduce the thunder and lightning of that day, except in a spiritual way. If we do, it will be a salutary sermon when the people sit in their pews and the preacher begins to preach the Law in its fulness and to expound its spiritual meaning. There may be many in the audience who will say to themselves, "If that man is right, I am lost."

Some, indeed, may say: "That is not the way for an evangelical minister to preach." But it certainly is; he could not be an evangelical preacher if he did not preach the Law thus. The Law must precede the preaching of the Gospel, otherwise the latter will have no effect. First comes Moses, then Christ; or: First John the Baptist, the forerunner, then Christ. At first the people will exclaim, How terrible is all this! But presently the preacher, with shining eyes, passes over to the Gospel, and then the hearts of people are cheered. They see the object of the preacher's preceding remarks: he wanted to make them see how awfully contaminated with sins they were and how sorely they needed the Gospel.

For your catechizing you must adopt the same method. When explaining the Law, do not mingle Gospel elements with your catechization, except in the conclusion. Even little children have to pass through these experiences of anguish and terror in the presence of the Law. The reason why so many imagine that they can pass for really good Christians is because their parents reared them to be self-righteous Pharisees; they never made them aware of the fact that they are poor, miserable sinners. A person may have fallen into the most dreadful sins; but if he has been brought up properly, he says to himself when he hears the Law preached: "Surely I am an awful sinner!" A Pharisee who hears the same sermon may not repeat that confession, though he may have fallen into far greater sins.

The conversion of Pharisees is a far more difficult task than that of a person who acknowledges his sin. That was the deepest corruption of the Jews in the days of Christ, and it is that of the papists in our time. The Jews had mingled Gospel elements with the Law by telling the people: "If you do not actually slay somebody, you are not a murderer. If you do not commit manifest fornication, you are not guilty of adultery." Even concupiscence was declared a natural sensation. The papists say the same. When forced to admit that in the exposition of the Law by *Christ* some things are named that cannot be classified with gross acts contrary to the Law, they claim that these things are meant merely as good counsels of Christ, which may be adopted by those who strive for an exceptionally exalted place in heaven. The good works resulting from following these good counsels of Christ they call supererogatory.

In his comment on the words of Christ: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill," etc., *Luther* says (St. L. Ed. VII, 429f.): "Christ takes up some of the Ten

Commandments for the purpose of explaining them properly. He shows that the Pharisees and scribes, when teaching the Law, did not push their explanation and inculcation beyond the literal meaning of the commandments and made them applicable only to gross, external acts. For instance, in the Fifth Commandment (which He introduces first) they considered no more than the word *kill,* which they interpreted to mean actual slaying; and they allowed the people to stick to the notion that nothing else is forbidden in this commandment. Moreover, in order to escape the charge of manslaughter for delivering a person to the magistrates to be condemned to death, as they delivered Christ to the pagan Pontius Pilate, they framed a pretty pretense for keeping their own hands from being sullied with blood: they urged their ceremonial purity and sanctity to the point of refusing to enter the governor's palace and forcing Pilate against his will to kill Jesus. John 18, 28 ff. Later, still pretending perfect purity and innocence, they even rebuked the apostles for preaching Christ and charged them with the intention of bringing 'this man's blood' upon them. Acts 5, 28. They meant to say: Not we, but the heathen, killed Christ. A similar trick is recorded regarding King Saul in 1 Sam. 18, 25 ff. He was nursing a grudge against David and would have liked to kill him. But since he wished to pass for a holy man, he planned to do the killing not with his own hand, but to send him against the Philistines, who, he hoped, would slay him. Thus *his* hand would be innocent of murder!"

What the Jews accepted of the Fifth Commandment was the more literal and crass meaning of the terms. The teachers told the people: "If you omit such and such acts, you will pass for such as have well complied with the Fifth Commandment." These famous doctors, who made their boast of the Law, had emptied the Law of its contents and retained the mere shell. Our modern rationalists are doing the same. Their aim is merely to preserve the reputation of probity in their lives, hence, not to rush into abominable vices of which any decent citizen would have to be ashamed. Upright conduct, too, is the sole object of their preaching. Even so-called Christian preachers are found to do this.

The practise of the Pharisees has been taken up by the papists. Papists and Pharisees resemble one another as closely as two eggs. The papists, when handing heretics over to the magistrates, declare: "*Ecclesia not sitit sanguinem,* that is, The Church does not thirst for blood. True, many of our heretical enemies have been slain. However, it was not we who did that, but the magistrates." But if

the magistrates refused to do it, they were excommunicated by the Church. Thus the papists want to wash their hands of the blood of the martyrs. But they will not succeed; some day they will have to appear before God stained with the damning witness of this blood. The case of the Jews is similar. Had they known the spiritual meaning of the Law, they would also have acknowledged: "Yes, we are the ones who killed Christ; for it was we who cried, 'Crucify, crucify Him!' "

Luther proceeds: "Behold here the pretty sanctity of Pharisees, which can whitewash itself and retain the reputation of godliness, provided it does not employ its own hand for killing, though the heart is filled with wrath, hatred, and envy and conceals malignant and murderous intrigues, while the mouth spouts forth curses and blasphemies. Of the same stripe is the sanctity of our papists, who have become past masters in these tricks. To guard their sanctity against censure and not to be bound by the Word of Christ, they found a fine subterfuge in the twelve [evangelical] counsels which they extracted from the teaching of Christ. They claimed that not all that Christ had taught was of the nature of a command and a necessary requisite [for discipleship], but some of His teachings were meant as *a good counsel,* the following of which was left to everybody's discretion. These counsels were to be adopted by those who wished to achieve some especial merit before others. For the average person these counsels were a superfluous teaching that he could well do without. When you asked them their reason for framing these counsels from the teaching of Christ and how they proved their case, they would say: Well, you see it would be an excessive burdening of the Christian law (*nimis onerativum legis Christianae*); in other words, it would make Christianity too onerous an affair if all teachings of Christ were to be taken as actual commands. That is what the theologians of Paris unblushingly published in the treatise they directed against me. Forsooth, here we have some smart reasoning: being kind to your neighbor and not forsaking him in distress, as you would wish that people should treat you, that is to be an overgreat burden. And inasmuch as they deem it too onerous, they decree that it shall not be regarded as a command, but as a matter left to the option of such as would be glad to do it. Those, however, who are unwilling to do it are not to be burdened with it. That is the trick of directing Christ's speech, lording it over His Word and construing its meaning to suit our fancy. But He will not permit Himself to be cheated thus, nor will He revoke the verdict which He has laid down when

He said: Except you have a better kind of godliness to show, heaven will be closed against you, and you will be damned; or as He expresses it in a later statement: If you say to your brother, Thou fool, you shall be in danger of hell-fire. From this we can readily gather whether He offered counsels or issued commands."

Christ says: "If any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." The papists construe these words thus: "True, Christ did say that, but His words are merely evangelical counsels. If the question is how to get to heaven, you have to keep the Law. But if your object is to climb to a high place in heaven, you must carry out these counsels."

In his *Chapters in Theology* (*Loci Theol.*, Part II, fol. 104) *Chemnitz* enumerates these counsels. By the way, the supererogatory works resulting from following these counsels, you know, are the treasure from which the Pope distributes his indulgences. All told, there are twelve counsels: 1. *Voluntary poverty.* The words of Christ: "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven," Matt. 19, 21, are understood by the papists as being merely a good counsel. In their view this counsel is followed by those who enter a monastery. 2. *Celibacy.* This counsel the papists extract from Matt. 19, 12: "There are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs by men; and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." "Behold," they say, "our monks and nuns have adopted this good counsel." Or they put it this way: "They lead a life of chastity." 3. *Unconditional obedience* to the superior of an order. This good counsel, too, is followed by monks and nuns. 4. *Taking revenge.* It seems almost beyond belief that any one should arise in the Church and declare the divine command not to take revenge to be merely a good counsel. That amounts to saying: You might revenge yourself, but if you decline to do so, that is a splendid good work. 5. *Patiently suffering insult.* 6. *Giving alms.* 7. *Refraining from swearing.* 8. *Avoiding opportunities to commit sin.* This is awful! It is not necessary, then, to avoid all opportunities for sinning; but if you do so, you climb to the top of perfection! 9. *Having a right intention in whatever you do.* This would mean that, no matter what prompts you to do a good work, it is in every case a good work in the sight of God.

But if you are guided by a right motive, you are an exceptionally saintly person. 10. *Doing what Christ says in Matt. 23, 3: "They say and do not," and in Matt. 7, 5: "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye."* 11. *Not being concerned about temporal affairs.* In the view of papists this, too, is merely a good counsel. 12. *Admonishing a brother.* Imagine, this is not to be regarded as a real duty, not being a part of the Law!

You can see what an abominable perversion of the Law has been perpetrated by the papists. Verily, they have dissipated the inmost spirit of the Law. They imagine that it would be asking too much if everybody were required to obey all these teachings of Christ. Of course, all cannot enter a cloister. If they did, who would provide bread and meat? No, indeed; that would be asking too much! Oh, what an abomination!

The Jesuits came forward with the proclamation: Heretofore the poor Christians have been unduly oppressed with moral precepts. Hence we, the Jesuits, have formed a society for relieving Christians of the most grievous moral precepts. And they actually put their plan in operation, with this happy result that according to their ethical standards the most infamous scoundrel can still be a good Christian. Their moral code is the reverse of the Decalog: a person may commit the most horrible abominations, provided he does so from a good intention. He may poison his father if he has the good intention of becoming his heir. However, this entire ethical system of the papists and Jesuits has been overthrown by the words of Christ: "Whoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." This means that any one who fails to fulfil the Law in its spiritual meaning deserves to perish.

ELEVENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(December 5, 1884.)

Many solemn warnings against false teachers are found in Holy Scripture. One of the most solemn of them, if not the most solemn, is that found in Jer. 23, 22, where the Lord says regarding false teachers: "If they had stood in My counsel and had caused My people to hear My words, then they should have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings." This shows that by teaching false doctrine a preacher may keep the souls entrusted to his care from being converted and — a result awful to

contemplate! — will cause them to be eternally lost. True, the people who permit themselves to be led astray by false teachings are lost by their own fault; for in innumerable passages of His Word, God has with great earnestness warned men against false teachers and prophets and has minutely described them. Any one, then, who despises these warnings will in the end have to blame himself amidst the wails of the hereafter. Still, this does not exculpate the false prophets and teachers who proclaim false teachings. On the contrary, their guilt is increased because they did not only choose the false way for themselves, but also pointed that way to the souls entrusted to them. For it is written, Heb. 13, 17: "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." Alas, what terror will seize all false teachers on the great day of account when all the souls led astray by them shall stand before the judgment-seat of God and raise accusations against them! What terror will seize Arius, who questioned the deity of Christ and wanted to snatch the crown of divine majesty from Christ's head! What terror will seize Pelagius, who denied that a person is made righteous and saved solely and alone by the grace of God! What terror, greater than these, will seize the Popes, who have formed all anti-christian doctrines into a system! How will they quake with terror when the souls without number whom they have led astray and whose hearts they have poisoned will stand in the presence of God! On that day every false teacher will wish that he had never been born and will curse the day when he was inducted into the sacred office of the ministry. On that day we shall see that false teaching is not the trifling and harmless matter that people in our day think it is.

My dear friends, heed well what God inspired His prophet Isaiah to write, chap. 66, 2: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My Word." Of the men who are serving in the sacred office of the ministry and of those who are training for the same, — of us all, God requires, not only that we love His Word, but also that we tremble at it, that is, that we sincerely dread to deviate from a single letter of the divine Word, that we do not dare to add anything to it or take anything from it. We are to be ready to shed our blood rather than yield a tittle of God's Word.

Choose our beloved *Luther* for your model. He says: "I have a sensation that one passage of Scripture could push me off the face of the earth." He means to say: Were I to note that the

doctrine which I proclaim to the people is contradicted by one passage of Scripture, I should have no rest day or night. I would not know whither to flee. The situation would be too terrible for me. — Strive to have the mind of David, the royal prophet, who says, Ps. 119, 129: "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee, and I am afraid of Thy judgments."

Such a mind, indeed, you cannot have, at least you cannot act upon it, while you are still without a clear and thorough knowledge of all doctrines of Holy Writ. For how can you keep what you do not possess? The course of study here at the seminary has been planned with the end in view of making you familiar with the entire Holy Scriptures and enabling you to understand each article of faith by itself as well as in its connection with, and in its relation to, all the other doctrines.

That is the object, likewise, of our Friday evening lectures, in which we are treating the distinction between the Law and the Gospel. For that is the paramount issue, that you learn rightly to divide the Law and the Gospel. I am not afraid — unless you become apostates — that you will set up new articles of faith; but I do fear that you will not rightly divide the Law and the Gospel. For this requires that you deviate neither to the right nor to the left, yielding neither to despondency nor to laxity.

Thesis VII.

In the third place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Gospel is preached first and then the Law; sanctification first and then justification; faith first and then repentance; good works first and then grace.

We are now to discuss a wrong division of the Word of God which occurs when the various doctrines are not presented in their order; when something that should come last is placed first. By this practise immense damage can be wrought in the hearts and the understanding of your auditors. Four types of this perverse sequence are possible.

In the first place, the order may be distorted if you preach the Gospel prior to the Law. You may think: "Can a person be so perverse? Why, every catechumen at school knows quite well that the Law comes first and then the Gospel." However, this can easily happen. We have instances in history which show that even entire religious associations became addicted to this error. For instance, the Antinomians in Luther's time, with Agricola, of Eis-

leben, as their leader; and the Herrnhuters (Moravians) in the eighteenth century. The latter preferred not to have the Law preached at all. Their chief tenet was: "The Gospel must be preached first; the suffering and bleeding of Christ must be presented, to start with." This was fundamentally wrong. We shall readily admit that the Herrnhuters have made an impression on many, but it was a mere surface impression. Their hearers were never made aware of their deep sinful depravity; they were never made to realize that they were enemies of God, worthy to be cast down to perdition rather than to be saved. — By the way, when we use the term "Gospel" in this connection, we refer, of course, to the Gospel in the strict sense of the term, namely, as the opposite of the Law.

In Mark 1, 15 we read: *Repent ye and believe the Gospel.* "Repent ye" is plainly a Law utterance. In the preaching of our Lord this comes first, being followed by the Gospel summons: "Believe the Gospel."

In this practise the holy apostles were followers of Christ. Paul goes on record describing his method of preaching in Acts 20, 21 thus: *Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.* The apostle preached repentance first and then faith; the Law first and then the Gospel.

In His valedictory remarks to His disciples, before ascending to heaven, our Lord said *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* The Lord does not reverse the divine order, thus: "Remission of sins and repentance." No; that would be a way that would absolutely not lead to salvation.

The second perversion of the true sequence occurs when sanctification of life is preached before justification, the preaching of forgiveness of sins; for justification by grace is nothing else than forgiveness of sins. I become righteous by appropriating the righteousness of Christ as my own.

Ps. 130, 4 David says: *There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.* The psalmist practically says to God: "First Thou must grant us remission of sins; after that we shall begin to reverence Thee, by walking in a new, sanctified life." The term "fear" in this text does not signify merely awe in God's presence, but the whole work of sanctification.

Ps. 119, 32 we read: *I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart.* First come the consolations of

God, justification, the granting of pardon to the sinner, the remission of sins. After that the psalmist expects to "run the way of God's commandments." He means to say: "Because Thou, O God, receivest me into Thy grace, therefore, because of this gracious act of Thine, I conceive a love for Thy commandments. As long as my sins are still unforgiven, I cannot love Thee and Thy commandments; no, I hate Thee. But as soon as I have been pardoned, I have obtained a new heart and gladly quit the world, for I find with Thee something better than what the world can give me."

The apostle tells the Corinthians in his First Epistle to them, chap. 1, 30: *Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption.* Here we have the true sequence. The first requisite is to obtain wisdom, knowledge of the way of salvation. This is the primary step. Next comes righteousness, which we obtain by faith. Not until this has been attained, comes sanctification. I must first know that God has forgiven my sins, that He has cast them into the depth of the sea, before it affords me real joy to lead a sanctified life. Before that it was a grievous burden to me. At first I was angry with God; I hated Him for demanding so many things of me. I should have liked to cast Him from His throne. I mused in my heart, It would be better if there were no God. But when I had been pardoned and justified, I delighted, not only in the Gospel, but also in the Law.

John 15, 5 the Lord says to His disciples: *I am the Vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing.* The Savior desires that we be grafted in Him like branches in a vine. That does not mean that we are to be physically incorporated in Him, but that we believe in Him with our whole heart, put our confidence and trust in Him, and embrace Him wholly with the arms of faith, so that we live only in Him, our Jesus, who has rescued us and saves us. When this takes place, we shall bear fruit. The Savior, then, shows that we must be justified before we can lead a sanctified life. If we become loose, severed branches, we wither and bear no fruit.

In His address before the apostles' convention at Jerusalem, Peter, speaking of what God had done for the Gentiles, says, Acts 15, 9: *He put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.* After being justified by faith, I am also purified, renewed, and sanctified by the same faith.

To confound justification and sanctification is one of the most horrid errors. The most beautiful preaching is rendered useless by this error. Only by a strict separation of justification and sanctification a sinner is made to understand clearly and becomes certain that he has been received into grace by God; and this knowledge equips him with strength to walk in a new life.

The third perversion of the true sequence — first Law, then Gospel — occurs when faith is preached first and repentance next, as was done by the Antinomians and is still done by the Herrnhuters in our time. Their current teaching is: "Faith is the primary affair; after that you must become contrite and repent." What a foolish direction! How can faith enter a heart that has not yet been crushed? How can a person feel hungry and thirsty while he loathes the food set before him? No, indeed; if you wish to believe in Christ, you must become sick; for Christ is a Physician only for those who are sick. He came to seek and to save that which is lost; therefore you must first become a lost and condemned sinner. He is the Good Shepherd, who goes in search of the lost sheep; therefore you must first realize that you are a lost sheep.

Acts 2, 38 the following incident at the conclusion of Peter's Pentecostal sermon is recorded: *Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* That is what Peter said in answer to the question of the Jews: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" He preaches to them, first, repentance; next, the remission of sins. Faith, then, follows repentance.

Under this head belong also all the passages cited before, especially Acts 20, 21. All who pervert this order have their teaching disproved by the rule: "Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." For a preacher these passages are the true guiding lights that keep him from straying from the right path.

Finally, the fourth perversion occurs when good works are preached first and then grace. The subjects mentioned in these four types are all analogous: one type is as bad as any of the others.

There is a golden text in Ephesians, chap. 2, 8—10: *For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* The apostle does not say: "We must do good works in order to

have a gracious God," but the very opposite: "By grace are ye saved; but by grace ye are created unto good works." When you have received grace, God has created you anew. In this new state you have to do good works; you can no longer remain under the dominion of sin.

Titus 2, 11. 12 we read: *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world.* Here we are told that grace is brought to us first, and then this grace begins a work of education upon us. We are placed under the divine pedagogy of grace. The moment a person accepts the grace which brought God down from heaven that grace begins to train him. The object of this training is to teach him how to do good works and lead an upright life.

The character of the Old Testament is chiefly legalistic, although the Gospel is proclaimed also in that part of the Bible; the character of the New Testament is chiefly evangelical, although Law portions are not lacking in it. The solemn revelation of the Law took place in the Old Testament, that of the Gospel in the New Testament. The Gospel was indeed available as far back as the days of Paradise, but its solemn inauguration had not yet taken place. The full revelation of the Law occurred on Sinai amid thunder and lightning and during an earthquake. It seemed as if the end of the world had come. In the New Testament era, at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, there also appeared fire, but it did not consume anything. Tongues of fire were seen on the heads of the apostles, but their hair was not singed. A mighty wind came roaring out of the sky, but it destroyed nothing; not a thing was moved out of its place. The purpose of the phenomena was to indicate that at that moment an entirely different, a comforting, revelation was about to be made.

Let us pass on to the apostolic epistles, especially to that addressed to the Romans, which contains the Christian doctrine in its entirety. What do we find in the first three chapters? The sharpest preaching of the Law. This is followed, towards the end of the third chapter and in chapters 4 and 5, by the doctrine of justification — nothing but that. Beginning at chapter 6, the apostle treats of nothing else than sanctification. Here we have a true pattern of the correct sequence: first the Law, threatening men with the wrath of God; next the Gospel, announcing the comforting promises of God. This is followed by an instruction regarding the things we are to do after we have become new men.

The prophets, too, when they wished to convert people, began by preaching the Law to them. When the chastisings of the Law had taken effect, they comforted the poor sinners. As to the apostles, no sooner had their hearers shown that they were alarmed than they seemed to know nothing else to do for them than to comfort them and pronounce absolution to them. Not until that had been done, would they say to their people: "Now you must show your gratitude toward God." They did not issue orders; they did not threaten when their orders were disregarded, but they pleaded and besought their hearers by the mercy of God to act like Christians.

That is genuine sanctification which follows upon justification; that is genuine justification which comes after repentance.

Let me illustrate by a few specimens of sermon outlines how you may even by these betray your ignorance of the distinction between Law and Gospel. I shall select very crass examples, as Luther was wont to do; for such examples readily help us to understand the matter under discussion. I love to do as Luther did; for if there is any good that I have achieved, I have learned it from him.

INCORRECT SERMON OUTLINES.

First Subject: The Way of Salvation. It consists of 1) faith; 2) true repentance. A perversion of this kind would constitute you genuine Antinomians and Herrnhuters.

Second Subject: Good Works. We shall see 1) wherein they consist; 2) that they must be performed in faith. In such an outline you would state what good works are, without having spoken of faith. A description of good works requires a statement that they are performed by believers. Otherwise you would have to formulate your judgment on good works from the Law. But that is wrong; for viewed in the light of the Law, any good work even of a Christian, no matter how good it may appear, is damnable in the sight of God.

Third Subject: Concerning Prayer. 1) True prayer is based on the certainty of our being heard; 2) true prayer consists in faith. According to this outline the first part of your sermon would be entirely wrong.

Fourth Subject: Promises and Threatenings in the Word of God. 1) Promises; 2) threatenings. When I hear these parts of the sermon announced, I say to myself: First the preacher is going to comfort me; then he will proceed to throw rocks at me, causing me to forget everything that he said at the start. No;

first you must come down on your hearers with the Law and then bind up their wounds with the divine promises. When a preacher concludes his sermons with threatenings, he has gone far towards making that sermon unproductive.

Fifth Subject: True Christianity. It consists, 1) in Christian living; 2) in true faith; 3) in a blessed death. This outline is simply horrible.

Sixth Subject: What must a person do to become assured of salvation? 1) He must amend his life and become a different man; 2) he must repent of his sins; 3) he must also apprehend Christ by faith. How is it possible to lead a better life when I have not yet reached that stage where I abhor sin and abominate a wicked life? The worst part is Part 3; for there is nothing that gives me greater assurance of being saved than faith.

Accordingly the view of the Pietists is certainly wrong, when they claimed that the various stages of the order of salvation are described in the Sermon on the Mount. They were tempted to adopt this view by the fact that Christ at the opening of this great sermon says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." But that view is untenable; for the phrase "poor in spirit" signifies "to have nothing to which the heart becomes attached." A millionaire may be poor in spirit; if his heart has not become attached to his money and chattels, he does not really possess them. On the other hand, a beggar may be the very opposite when he puts his trust in the little money he still has. The former is a "blessed" man, the latter is not.

In the view of the Pietists the second beatitude which Christ pronounced: "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted," refers to mourning over sin. They called this the second stage of the order of salvation. But Christ refers to the sorrowing and cross-bearing which His followers have to do in this life for His name's sake.

Continuing, Christ says: "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." Here the Pietists have labored mightily to find a passable meaning. They were troubled by the fact that up to this point no mention has yet been made of justification by faith. That clogs their scheme of the order of salvation. They turn marvelous mental somersaults in an attempt to evolve their "stages" from the beatitudes; but their efforts are futile.

Next, Christ says: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." This is to

represent the fourth "stage." Aye, but does meekness actually precede the other stages? — If you ever preach on the Beatitudes, have a care not to follow Pietistic preachers.

Luther was forced to declare his position over against the Antinomians. They contended that grace must be preached first and then repentance. Indeed, they insisted that in the churches the Law must not be preached at all. They claimed the Law belongs in the court-house and on the gallows; it is to be preached to thieves and murderers, not to honest people, least of all to Christians.

In his treatise *Against the Antinomians,* of the year 1539, *Luther* writes (St. L. Ed. XX, 1618): "The Antinomians have invented a new method by which grace is to be preached first and after that the wrath of God. The word *Law* is not to be spoken at all within earshot of Christians. That is a pretty seesaw, which pleases them wonderfully, because by this trick they can turn the Scriptures up or down and think they have become *lux mundi* [a world's marvel]. They force their notion upon the statement of St. Paul in Rom. 1."

The Antinomians pointed to v. 16 in this chapter, where St. Paul says: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." "You see," they said, "that the apostle begins with the Gospel." But these words are preceded by the introduction. The sixteenth verse states the subject of the entire epistle. In v. 18 he begins his first part and concludes it by saying: "What I have demonstrated so far is that all men are sinners and come short of the glory of God." Not until he enters upon his second part, does he preach the Gospel.

Luther proceeds: "They do not see that Paul teaches the very opposite: he begins by exhibiting, first, the wrath of God from heaven; he denounces all men as sinners and as guilty in the sight of God. After that he teaches those who have been made conscious of their sin how to obtain grace and become righteous in the sight of God. That is his powerful and plain argument in the first three chapters. It is an extraordinary blindness and stupidity of the Antinomians to imagine that the wrath of God is something distinct from the Law. That cannot be; for the revelation of God's wrath is the Law in its operation upon the intellect and will of man. Paul expresses this fact when he says: 'The Law worketh wrath' (*lex iram operatur*). Now, then, haven't they scored a fine point by doing away with the Law, in consideration of the fact that, after all, they have to teach it when they teach the wrath of God?

But they put the shoe on the foot the wrong way, trying to teach us the Law after the Gospel and wrath after grace. I am well aware of the devil's aim. I see what abominable errors he is bent on introducing by means of this exegetical teeter-totter. But I cannot treat of them at this time." What Luther means to say by calling the Scripture interpretation of the Antinomians a *Katzenstuehlchen* (seesaw, teeter-totter) is this: They have fixed matters so that they can set up the Law or the Gospel as they please.

In his *Commentary* on Genesis (chap. 21, 12. 16) *Luther* writes (St. L. Ed. I, 1427 ff.): "It is indeed correct to say that people must be raised up and comforted. But an additional statement must be made, showing who the people are that are to be comforted, namely, those who, like Ishmael and his mother, have been thrust out of their home and fatherland, who are nearly famished with hunger and thirst in the desert, who groan and cry to the Lord, and are on the brink of despair. Such people are proper hearers of the Gospel." Hagar and Ishmael had to be brought into misery before they could be freed from their pride.

Man is by nature a conceited being. He says: "What wrong have I done? I have committed neither manslaughter, nor adultery, nor fornication, nor larceny." Wrapped in these miserable rags of his civil righteousness he purposes to make his stand before God. That spirit of pride in himself must be cast out. That requires an application of the hammer of the Law which will crush his stony heart.

Luther continues: "Therefore the Antinomians deserve to be hated by everybody, spite of the fact that they cite us as an example in order to defend their teaching." The Antinomians pointed to the fact that Luther himself at first had preached nothing but comfort. They claimed that he had now departed from his former teaching and had become a legalist. That, they said, explained his opposition to them. But they misjudged Luther. When he began his public activity, he did not have to instruct the people at great length in the Law. The people were so crushed that hardly one among them dared to believe that he was in a state of grace with God. For in their best efforts at preaching the Roman priests preached the Law, placing alongside of the divine Law the laws of the Church and the statutes of former councils, theologians, and Popes. When Luther came forward, he had passed through the agony that harassed the people; he knew that no more effectual help could be provided for the people in their misery than the

preaching of the Gospel. That was the reason why the entire Christian Church in those days experienced a sensation as if dew from heaven or life-giving spring showers were being poured out upon them.

Accordingly, Luther proceeds: "They cite us as an example to defend their teaching, while the reason why we had to start our teaching with the doctrine of divine grace is as plain as daylight. The accursed Pope had utterly crushed the poor consciences of men with his human ordinances. He had taken away all proper means for bringing aid and comfort to hearts in misery and despondency and rescuing them from despair. What else could we have done at that time?" If Luther had smitten these miserable people still more, he would have been the meanest kind of torturer.

But conditions have changed. In those days people dreaded the Law of God and were in anguish of hell; now their slogan is: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we are dead, and death ends all." Those who do not take this extreme position imagine that matters will not be as bad as they are pictured. To such people you must preach the Law, or you will accomplish nothing.

Luther continues: "However, I know, too, that those who are surfeited, ease-loving, and overfed must be addressed in a different strain. We were all like castaways in those days and grievously tormented. The water in the jug was gone; that is, there was nothing to comfort men with. Like Ishmael, we all lay dying under the shrub. The kind of teachers we needed were such as made us behold the grace of God and taught us how to find refreshment. The Antinomians insist that the preaching of repentance must begin with the doctrine of grace. I have not followed that method. For I knew that Ishmael must first be cast out and made despondent before he can hear the comforting words of the Angel. Accordingly, I have followed the rule not to minister comfort to any person except to those who have become contrite and are sorrowing because of their sin, — those who have despaired of self-help, whom the Law has terrified like a leviathan that has pounced upon them and almost perplexed them. For these are the people for whose sake Christ came into the world, and He will not have a smoking flax to be quenched. Is. 42, 3. That is why He is calling: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden.' Ishmael had not been reduced to this strait before he was expelled from Abraham's home; he was proud and secure and an antinomistic epicurean. Because he had been born before Isaac, he would say: I am lord and heir in this house; Isaac and Sarah

shall have to yield to me. Now, was this pride of his to be praised and tolerated, or was he to be rebuked for it? If the latter, in what other way could he have been rebuked than by being driven from the house with his mother and not being permitted to take anything with him out of Abraham's house except the wages of the Law, bread and water? For that is the way the Law usually acts: it leads the thief handcuffed to the gallows; before he is throttled, it refreshes him with a draught of water. But at last there is no more water, and nothing remains to do but to die. More than this the Law never does. Let us learn the lesson, then, *viz.*, that God is an enemy of every proud person; but those who have been humbled and have felt the power of the Law He comforts, either by men or by an angel from heaven; for He does not want such people to perish. On the other hand, He will not suffer the secure and proud to abide in Abraham's house.

"Now, a teacher and preacher must be trained in these two things and possess skill and experience in them; *viz.*, he must both rebuke and crush the obstinate, and again, he must be able to comfort those whom he has rebuked and crushed, lest they despair utterly and be swallowed up by the Law."

TWELFTH EVENING LECTURE.

(December 12, 1884.)

The worst fault in modern preaching, my dear friends, is this, that the sermons lack point and purpose; and this fault can be noticed particularly in the sermons of modern preachers who are believers. While unbelieving and fanatical preachers have quite a definite aim, — pity, that it is not the right one! — believing preachers, as a rule, imagine that they have fully discharged their office, provided what they have preached has been the Word of God. That is about as correct a view as when a ranger imagines he has discharged his office by sallying forth with his loaded gun and discharging it into the forest; or as when an artilleryman thinks he has done his duty by taking up his position with his cannon in the line of battle and by discharging his cannon. Just as poor rangers and soldiers as these latter are, just so poor and useless preachers are those who have no plan in mind and take no aim when they are preaching. Granted their sermons contain beautiful thoughts; they do not, for that matter, take effect. They may

occasionally make the thunders of the Law roll in their sermons, yet there is no lightning that strikes. Again, they may water the garden assigned to them with the fructifying waters of the Gospel, but they are pouring water on the beds and the paths of the garden indiscriminately, and their labor is lost.

Neither Christ nor the holy apostles preached in that fashion. When they had finished preaching, every hearer knew: He meant me, even when the sermon had contained no personal hints or insinuations. For instance, when our Lord Christ had delivered the powerful, awful parable of the murderous vine-dressers, the high priests and scribes confessed to themselves: He means us. When the holy Apostle Paul, on a certain occasion, had preached before the profligate and unjust Governor Felix concerning righteousness, temperance, and the Judgment to come, Felix perceived immediately that Paul was aiming his remarks at him. He trembled, but being unwilling to be converted, he said to Paul: "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." But he never did call him. He had heard the sermon suited to his spiritual condition, and Paul's well-aimed remarks had struck home.

The reason, then, my dear friends, why in the Lutheran congregations of our former home country Germany unbelieving preachers are nearly always in the ascendancy is unquestionably this: the sermons of the Christian preachers are aimless efforts. Unbelievers are increasing in the congregations about as fast as the Christian preachers are increasing, of whom there are considerably more now than when I was young. Why do they accomplish nothing? Oh, would to God that these dear men had the humility to sit down at Luther's feet and study his postils! They would learn how to preach effectively. For the Word of God, when preached as it should be, never returns void.

May God help you in your future ministry not to become aimless prattlers, so that you will have to complain that you accomplish so little, when nobody but yourselves is at fault because you have no definite aim when preparing your sermons and do not reflect: To such and such people I want to drive home a lesson, — not this or that person whom I am going to name, but persons whose condition I know to be such and such.

However, while it is important that sermons do not lack a special aim, it is equally important that your aim be the right one. If you do not aim properly, your preaching, after all, will be useless, whether you preach the Law or the Gospel.

Thesis VIII.

In the fourth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Law is preached to those who are already in terror on account of their sins or the Gospel to those who live securely in their sins.

In the opening lecture on our series of theses we got acquainted with the six points of difference between the Law and the Gospel. They differ 1) as regards the manner of their being revealed to men; 2) as regards their contents; 3) as regards the promises held out by either doctrine; 4) as regards their threatenings; 5) as regards the function and the effect of either doctrine; 6) *as regards the persons to whom either the one or the other doctrine must be preached.* As a rule, point No. 6 is named last. The reason is not that it is less important; for this point introduces a difference of especially great importance. It is this: the Gospel must be preached only to bruised, contrite, miserable sinners; the Law, to secure sinners. Inverting this order means confounding both and, by confounding them, commingling both in the most dangerous manner. Of the truth of this we became convinced in our first lecture, from the statement in 1 Tim. 1, 8—10: *We know that the Law is good if a man use it lawfully. Knowing this, that the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.* No law is given to a person who is made righteous by Christ, but to the unrighteous and disobedient. These are the persons to whom the Law must be preached. To make a miserable, contrite sinner the subject of Law-preaching is to commit a grievous sin against him; for the Gospel ought to be preached to him.

Isaiah says, chap. 61, 1—3: *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointeth Me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.* The phrase "day of vengeance"

does not signify a day of judgment on men; for to proclaim such a day would not be proclaiming an acceptable year. The meaning is this: The Son of God meant to take vengeance on Satan, who had hurled the human race into misery. For this reason the proclamation of "the day of vengeance" is a cheering, comforting message to us. If God had not avenged our Fall upon Satan, we should be lost. If Christ had not redeemed us from the devil, we could not rejoice, but would have to remain in sadness. The picturesque phrases which follow in this text must all be understood figuratively, as pointing to spiritual gifts of grace.

These texts show us that according to God's Word not a drop of evangelical consolation is to be brought to those who are still living securely in their sins. On the other hand, to the brokenhearted not a syllable containing a threat or a rebuke is to be addressed, but only promises conveying consolation and grace, forgiveness of sin and righteousness, life and salvation.

That was the practise of our Lord and Savior. One day He was approached by a woman "which was a sinner" (Luke 7, 37), who in the presence of self-righteous Pharisees knelt down, washed His feet with her hot tears, and dried them with her hair, with which in former days, no doubt, she had frequently made a display of vanity. She was crushed when she came to Jesus; there was no one to comfort her. But she turned to Jesus, for she had realized that where He was, there was the throne of grace. What did the Lord do on that occasion? He did not utter one word of reproof because of the sins she had committed in darkness, — for she had, no doubt, lived in the worst sins of fornication, — no, not a word. He simply said to her: "Thy sins are forgiven." In another, a similar instance He dismissed the guilty woman with the assurance: "Neither do I condemn thee," and with the brief admonition: "Go and sin no more."

The same treatment the Lord accorded to Zacchaeus, the nefarious publican, who had defrauded people throughout the land. He may have heard some things from Christ directly and many more things from the report of others. He had gained the conviction that he could not go on in his sinful ways, but must amend his conduct. When the Lord was about to pass in the neighborhood, he mounted a sycomore-tree, because he wanted to see this holy Man. What did the Lord do? Catching sight of him in the tree, He called to him: "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." Zacchaeus surely expected that the Lord would go over the record of his sins with him and

hold up to him all the evil he had done. But Jesus did nothing of the kind. On the contrary, in the house of Zacchaeus He said: "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." It is Zacchaeus who says: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." The Lord did not demand this of him, but his own conscience, first alarmed, but now quieted, demanded this joyful act of generosity to the poor from him. No doubt, he kept his promise.

The parable of the prodigal is another illustration. The Lord pictures him to us, after he had wasted everything he had with harlots, as returning to his father with a contrite heart. The father receives him without a word of censure, but falls upon his neck, kisses him, and exclaims: "Let us be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." A joyous banquet is prepared, but not a word of reproof is spoken.

This attitude the Lord maintains even while hanging on the cross. Next to Him hangs one who has led an infamous life. The patient suffering of Christ has given him a new understanding, which he voices in these words: "We, indeed, are justly in this condemnation; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." Turning finally to the Lord, he says: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." He recognizes in Jesus the Messiah. And now observe that the Lord does not reply, "What! Thee I am to remember? Thee, who hast done so many wicked things?" No, He does not cast up his sins to him at all, but simply says: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

By these incidents the Lord shows us what we are to do, even to-day, for a poor sinner who may have led a shameful life, but has become crushed and contrite, full of terror because of his sins. In such a case we should not lose any time in censuring and reproving him, but absolve and comfort him. That is the way to divide the Gospel from the Law.

The practise of the holy apostles was identical with that of the Lord. You will recall the incident of the jailer at Philippi. He was on the point of committing a shocking deed, the mortal sin of suicide, when Paul called to him: "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." All through the night he had heard Paul and Silas singing praises to God. No doubt a new knowledge had begun to dawn on him. When he heard Paul's warning cry, he called for a light, came trembling and, falling down before Paul and Silas,

said: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They do not tell him of a number of things that he will have to do first, for instance, to feel contrite. They simply say to him: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." They simply invite him to accept the mercy of God; for that is what faith is — accepting the divine mercy, or grace.

Let me now cite you from Luther's writings, not so much passages in which he insists that the Gospel, pure and unalloyed, must be proclaimed to poor sinners, but rather a particular incident which illustrates how Luther brought consolation to a person who had fallen into a great and grievous sin. The party in question was that splendid man Spalatin (born 1482), who had a great share in the work of the Reformation. He became Ecclesiastical Counselor to the Elector of Saxony and lived at Altenburg. He was Luther's intimate friend. He had been party to an advice given to a certain pastor to marry the stepmother of his deceased wife. The marriage was absolutely contrary to God's Word, and the advice was the more appalling since the Apostle Paul, in dealing with a similar offense in 1 Cor. 5, had declared that it involved fornication such as is not so much as named among the Gentiles. When the truth dawned on good Spalatin, he refused to be comforted. Luther learned that he had fallen into melancholy. No comfort offered him would take effect. He imagined that no consolation of Scripture could apply to a man like him who had known the Word of of God so well and had derived so much consolation from it.

How did *Luther* proceed to comfort this man? He wrote him a letter, which began as follows (St. L. Ed. X, 1729ff.): "Grace and peace from God in Christ and the consolations of the Holy Spirit to my worthy master in Christ, George Spalatin, superintendent of the churches in Misnia, most faithful pastor of Altenburg, my beloved in the Lord. Amen.

"My dearest Spalatin, I heartily sympathize with you and earnestly pray our Lord Jesus Christ to strengthen you and give you a cheerful heart. I should like to know, and am making diligent inquiries to find out, what your trouble may be or what has caused your breakdown. I am told by some that it is nothing else than depression and heaviness of heart, caused by the matrimonial affair of a parson who was publicly united in marriage to the stepmother of his deceased wife. If this is true, I beseech you most urgently not to become self-centered and heed the thoughts and sensations of your own heart, but to listen to me, your brother, who is speaking to you in the name of Christ. Otherwise your

despondency will grow beyond endurance and kill you; for St. Paul says, 2 Cor. 7, 10: 'The sorrow of the world worketh death.' I have often passed through the same experience and witnessed the same in 1540, in the case of Magister Philip, who was nearly consumed by heaviness of heart and despondency on account of the landgrave's affair. However, Christ used my tongue to raise him up again. I say this on the supposition that you have sinned and are partly to blame for the aforementioned marriage, because you approved it."

Observe that Luther grants that Spalatin had committed a grievous wrong by approving the marriage, by advising in favor of it before it was contracted.

Luther proceeds: "Yea, I shall go further and say: Even if you had committed more numerous and grievous sins in this present and other instances than Manasseh, the king of Judah, whose offenses and crimes could not be eradicated throughout his posterity down to the time when Jerusalem was destroyed, while your offense is very light, because it concerns a temporal interest and can be easily remedied; nevertheless, I repeat it, granted you are to blame, are you going to worry yourself to death over it and by thus killing yourself commit a still more horrible sin against God?"

Luther means to say: This marriage can be dissolved, for it is not legitimate. It would be a greater sin now to despair of the mercy of God than it was to advise this marriage. For despairing of God's mercy is always the most horrible sin, because it means that we declare God to be a liar.

Luther goes on: "It is bad enough to know that you made a mistake in this matter. Now do not let your sin stick in your mind, but get rid of it. Quit your despondency, which is a far greater sin. Listen to the blessed consolation which the Lord offers you by the prophet Ezekiel, who says, chap. 33, 11: 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.' Do you imagine that only in your case the Lord's hand is shortened? Is. 59, 1. Or has He in your case alone forgotten to be gracious and shut up His tender mercies? Ps. 77, 10. Or are you the first man to aggravate his sin so awfully that henceforth there is no longer a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities? Heb. 4, 15. Do you consider it a new marvel when a person living this life in the flesh, with innumerable arrows of so many devils flying about him, is occasionally wounded and laid prostrate?"

Luther means to say: Why are you surprised at your grievous

fall? That is a common occurrence. The terrible part is only that we refuse to rise again and, like miserable reprobates, crawl back to the throne of grace.

Luther continues: "It seems to me, my dear Spalatin, that you have still but a limited experience in battling against sin, an evil conscience, the Law, and the terrors of death. Or Satan has removed from your vision and memory every consolation which you have read in the Scriptures. In days when you were not afflicted, you were well fortified and knew very well what the office and benefits of Christ are. To be sure, the devil has now plucked from your heart all the beautiful Christian sermons concerning the grace and mercy of God in Christ by which you used to teach, admonish, and comfort others with a cheerful spirit and a great, buoyant courage. Or it must surely be that heretofore you have been only a trifling sinner, conscious only of paltry and insignificant faults and frailties."

There are only two ways in which Luther can explain to himself why Spalatin refuses to be comforted. Either he has hitherto failed to perceive his misery and wretchedness under sin; he has not been aware of the fact that he is a great sinner by nature; his grievous fall had to occur in order that his eyes might be opened to these facts. Or Satan must have hidden every consolation out of Spalatin's sight. Practically Luther says to Spalatin: Had you fully realized the awful corruption of your heart in its relation to God, you would not be so inconsolable; for you would say to yourself: Alas! the fountain is so polluted; that is why such filth has to flow from it.

To return to Luther: "Therefore my faithful request and admonition is that you join our company and associate with us, who are real, great, and hard-boiled sinners. You must by no means make Christ to seem paltry and trifling to us, as though He could be our Helper only when we want to be rid from imaginary, nominal, and childish sins. No, no! That would not be good for us. He must rather be a Savior and Redeemer from real, great, grievous, and damnable transgressions and iniquities, yea, from the very greatest and most shocking sins; to be brief, from all sins added together in a grand total."

To the company of real, great, abominable sinners to which Spalatin is invited Luther feels that he belongs himself. He argues that by making our sins small, we make Christ small. That would practically amount to saying: Christ can forgive small, but not great sins.

When a person has committed a great sin and is unconcerned about it, he is beyond help. But when he worries about it, his help has already come. Luther relates: "Dr. Staupitz comforted me on a certain occasion when I was a patient in the same hospital and suffering the same affliction as you, by addressing me thus: Aha! you want to be a painted sinner and, accordingly, expect to have in Christ a painted Savior. You will have to get used to the belief that Christ is a real Savior and you a real sinner. For God is neither jesting nor dealing in imaginary affairs, but He was greatly and most assuredly in earnest when He sent His own Son into the world and sacrificed Him for our sakes, etc. Rom. 8, 32; John 3, 16. These and similar reflections, drawn from consolatory Bible-texts, have been snatched from your memory by the accursed Satan, and hence you cannot recall them in your present great anguish and despondency. For God's sake, then, turn your ears hither, brother, and hear me cheerfully singing — me, your brother, who at this time is not afflicted with the despondency and melancholy that is oppressing you and therefore is strong in faith, so that you, who are weak and harried and harassed by the devil, can lean on him for support until you have regained your old strength, can bid defiance to the devil, and cheerfully sing: 'Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall; but the Lord helped me.' Ps. 118, 13. Imagine now that I am Peter holding out my hand to you and saying to you: 'In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk.' Acts 3, 6. For I know I am not mistaken, nor is the devil talking through me; but since I am laying the Word of Christ before you, it is Christ who speaks to you through me and bids you obey and trust your brother who is of the same household of faith. It is Christ that absolves you from this and all your sins, and I am a partaker of your sin by helping you to bear up under it."

On the occasion to which Luther refers he had gone to Dr. Staupitz to pour out his sorrowful heart to him. He had not committed any gross and manifest sins, but he was worried over the sinful condition of his heart. God had granted Luther an extraordinary measure of knowledge that made him understand the corruption of human nature. His remark about a painted Savior is striking. If we do not want such a Savior, we must not be surprised when we discover ourselves to be real, actual sinners. Luther's appeal to Spalatin to receive him, not for his person's sake, but because he is laying the Word of God before him, is a fine touch. Spalatin is to see Christ standing before him and speaking to him in the person of Luther. Also the remark about Luther's

sharing Spalatin's sin by helping him bear his burden is excellent. When a minister absolves a person who has confessed his sin to him, he takes that sin of the other on his own conscience. He can cheerfully do this, for the party that came to him to confess perhaps the most horrible sins came with a bruised heart. He may cheerfully pronounce absolution to such a person and say: "I shall assume the responsibility for what I am doing, for I know that on the great day of Judgment Christ will say to me: You did right; for he came to you with a bruised conscience, and it was proper that you ministered the Gospel to him."

Luther concludes his letter with these urgent remarks: "See that you accept and appropriate to yourself the comfort I am offering you; for it is true, certain, and reliable, since the Lord has commanded me to communicate it to you and bidden you to accept it from me. For if even I am cut to the quick by seeing you in such awful distress because of your deep melancholy, it gives God a far greater displeasure to behold it; for 'He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil.' Joel 2, 13. Therefore do not turn away from him who is coming to comfort you and announce the will of God to you and who hates and abominates your despondency and melancholy as a plague of Satan. Do not by any means permit the devil to portray Christ to you differently from what He is in truth. Believe the Scripture, which testifies that He 'was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil.' 1 John 3, 8. Your melancholy is a work of the devil, which Christ wants to destroy if you will only let Him. You have had your fill of anguish; you have sorrowed enough; you have exceeded your penance. Therefore, do not refuse my consolation; let me help you. Behold my faithful heart, dear Spalatin, in dealing with you and speaking to you. I shall consider it the greatest favor that I have ever received from you if you allow the comfort which I am offering you, or rather the absolution, pardon, and restoration of the Lord Christ, to abide in you. If you do this, you will, after your recovery, be forced to confess yourself that you have offered the most pleasing and acceptable sacrifice to the Lord by your obedience; for Ps. 147, 11 it is written: 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy'; again, in Ps. 34, 18: 'The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit'; and in Ps. 51, 17: 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.' Therefore let the accursed

devil with his despondency scamper away like a whipped dog. He wants to make me sad on your account; he wants to blast my joy in the Lord; yea, if he could, he would swallow us all up at one gulp. May Christ, our Lord, rebuke and chastise him, and may He strengthen, comfort, and preserve you by His Spirit! Amen. Comfort your wife with these and your own more effectual words. I have not the leisure to write also to her. Given at Zeitz, August 21, A. D. 1544. Your Martin Luther."

Luther argues that sharing a brother's sin entitles you to the claim that the brother must, in turn, share your comfort. God takes no pleasure in beholding a person stricken with remorse and laboring with might and main to remain thus stricken. When the hammer of His Law has crushed us, we are to flee from Moses to Christ. That is the right procedure. — Luther's exegesis of 1 John 3, 8 is beautiful. The term "works of the devil" is commonly interpreted to signify horrible and gross sins, but Luther comprises in that term also doubt and melancholy as being the most grievous sin. Christ did not come to fill us with sadness, but with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. — Luther wrote this letter to Spalatin while stopping during a journey at Zeitz. The only thanks which he craves for the task of composing this letter — no doubt, with heartfelt sighings to God — is that Spalatin accept his consolations.

I wanted to communicate this letter to you in its entirety, hoping that it may have pleased you so much that you will often read it again. Think of it particularly whenever a sorrowing, disconsolate sinner approaches you in your pastoral capacity. Read this letter as a preparation for the evangelical treatment which you are to accord to such a sinner. Remember, Luther admits that Spalatin has sinned, but he realized that at that particular moment he must not, for God's sake, say anything to Spalatin that might strike his friend's heart like an arrow.

Let me read another letter to you which Luther wrote, as far back as 1516, to the Augustinian friar Spenlein, who was in great agony concerning his state of grace. Spenlein had been an inmate with Luther in the Augustinian monastery at Wittenberg. In the judgment of all who are familiar with Luther's writings this letter is most excellent. One marvels that Luther could write such a letter even at that early date. It is sterling gold and pure honey.

"I wish to know," Luther writes (St. L. Ed. XXIa, 20f.), "the condition of your heart, whether you have at last come to loathe your own righteousness and desire to rejoice in the righteousness of Christ and to be of good cheer because of it. For in these days

the temptation to presumptuousness is very strong, particularly in those who strive with might and main to be righteous and godly and do not know of the altogether immaculate righteousness of God which is freely given us in Christ. As a result of this they are searching for something good in themselves until they become confident that they can pass muster before God as people who are properly adorned with virtuous and meritorious deeds, — all of which is impossible. While you were with us, you held this opinion, or rather this error, just as I did. For my part, I am still wrestling with this error and am not quite rid of it yet. Therefore, my dear brother, learn Christ — Christ Crucified. Learn to sing praises to Him and to despair utterly of your own works. Say to Him: Thou, my Lord Jesus, art my Righteousness; I am Thy sin. Thou hast taken from me what is mine and hast given me what is Thine. Thou didst become what Thou wert not and madest me to be what I was not. Beware of your ceaseless striving after a righteousness so great that you no longer appear as a sinner in your own eyes and do not want to be a sinner. *For Christ dwells only in sinners.* He came down from heaven, where He dwelt in the righteous, for the very purpose of dwelling in sinners also. Ponder this love of His, and you will realize His sweetest consolation. For if we must achieve rest of conscience by our own toil and worry, *for what purpose did He die?* Therefore, you are to find peace in Him by a hearty despair of yourself and your own works. And now that He has received you, made your sins His and His righteousness yours, learn also from Him firmly to believe this, as behooves you; for cursed is every one who does not believe this."

We note that Luther tells Spenlein not to be surprised when he finds nothing meritorious in himself, but only sin. He must learn to sing praises to Christ and to despair of himself as of a person in whom nothing good is found except what the good God has done through him. He is not to strive after a righteousness of his own, which would make him seem no longer a sinner. For in one that knows what God's Word says about this matter, that would be an impudent denial of his Redeemer. — The remark of Luther that Christ dwells only in sinners, Walch, the editor of Luther's Works, has annotated by a gloss that limits Luther's remark to poor sinners. That is self-evident. Bold sinners do not acknowledge that they are sinners. What others call sin they call human weakness and a natural, inborn disposition. Their occasional display of godliness is sheer hypocrisy. They may say: "We are such poor sinners," but they do not mean that statement in

the Scriptural sense. They say: "Well, we cannot help being weak mortals," but one is a drunkard, another a fornicator, the third a thief, etc. All these vices are to pass for mere weaknesses. Verily, Christ dwells only in sinners who are such in their own estimation. He had dwelt among the angels, but came down on earth because He wanted to make His abode also with sinners. — Luther's surprised query: Why, then, did Christ die? is an excellent point. Any one who is troubled on account of his sins is a fool for not promptly taking refuge with Christ and for imagining that his evil conscience is proof that he may not come to God. No; *this* is what the evil conscience indicates: You *should* come to Jesus; He will give you a cheerful conscience, causing you to praise God with a joyful heart when you rise in the morning and lie down to rest at night. For what does it mean that Christ died for you? Accordingly, when you have committed this, that, or the other sin and are perplexed about a way out of your sin, do not try to make a way yourself. Go to Him who alone knows a way — go to Christ. — It is a remarkable statement of Luther, but certainly true, that we are to find peace by wholly despairing of our own works. When a poor sinner regards himself, he does despair; when He looks at Jesus, he is made confident.

What Luther wrote to Spenlein is the most beautiful Gospel that can be preached. For it declares that Christ has come in behalf of everybody, that He has borne every man's sin, that He calls on every one to believe in Him, to rejoice and rest assured that his sins are forgiven and that in the hour of death he will depart saved.

THIRTEENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(January 9, 1885.)

To achieve creditable results, my friends, a minister must needs preach the Word of God in its truth and purity, without any adulteration whatsoever. This is the first and foremost requisite for success. Some preachers of our time hush certain teachings that are offensive to worldly people. They do this with the good intention of not shocking their hearers. But this is a great mistake. You cannot make a person a true Christian by oratory, though it be ever so sublime and fervent, but only by the Word of God. The Word of God alone produces repentance, faith, and godliness and preserves men therein unto the end.

The second requisite for effective preaching is that the preacher not only himself believe the things he preaches to others, but that his heart be full of the truths which he proclaims, so that he enters his pulpit with the ardent desire to pour out his heart to his hearers. He must have an enthusiastic grasp, in the right sense of the word, of his subject. Then his hearers get the impression that the words dropping from his lips are flames from a soul on fire. That does not mean that the Word of God must receive its power and life from the living faith of the preacher; for the Lord says distinctly: "The words that I speak, they are spirit, and they are life." John 6, 63. Moreover, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says: "The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. 4, 12. But when a preacher proclaims what he has ever so often experienced in his own heart, he easily finds the right words to speak convincingly to his hearers. Coming from the heart, his words, in turn, go to the hearts of his hearers, according to the good old saying: *Pectus disertum facit,* that is, it is the *heart* that makes eloquent. This does not mean the artificial eloquence acquired in a school of elocution, but the sane spiritual art of reaching the hearts of hearers. For when the hearers get the impression that the preacher is in full and dread earnest, they feel themselves drawn with an irresistible force to pay the closest attention to what the preacher is teaching in his sermon. That is the reason why many simple, less gifted, and less learned preachers accomplish more than the most highly gifted and profoundly learned men.

Would that you, my dear friends, were, first of all, real Christians, filled with ardent zeal for the truth. That is the equipment for becoming, in the course of time, powerful preachers, whose spirit seizes the hearers with irresistible force, as the example of the apostles evidences. The people could not tell why the preaching of these simple men made such a powerful impression on them.

Far from suggesting that great gifts and thorough theological learning are not to be highly esteemed, I should rather claim the contrary to be true. For if to the living faith of the preacher there are added great gifts and thorough learning, he will, in the end, be a mighty, efficient tool in the hands of God, since all natural endowments and whatever we have acquired by our natural zeal is not put aside by God when we enter the ministry, but is purified and pressed into His service. That is the reason why great hap-

penings took place and great results were achieved in the kingdom of God whenever great gifts and thorough learning were coupled with living faith. First and foremost I wish to point to the Apostle Paul, who was the only scholar among the apostles. According to his own testimony, he labored more and accomplished more than the rest. Another instance is that of Luther, the great Reformer. If he had merely had a heroic faith and would not at the same time have been a great, highly gifted, and learned man, he would never have become the Reformer who gloriously accomplished the greatest work of his age.

Accordingly, I would exhort you, during this period of your studies, to strive day and night to attain the highest mark in every branch of theological knowledge, not only in Didactic, but also in Practical Theology. My cordial good wishes are with you, and I pray the Lord that they be fulfilled. If they are, you will be living proofs of the importance of joining these two factors, a living faith and good endowments, with faithful and diligent study.

I pass on to another point. But do not regard my remarks so far as the usual introduction; it was merely a preamble. I wish that my words, though spoken in weakness, would find permanent lodgment in your hearts. God the Holy Spirit grant it! For much, my friends, very much, depends not only on your bearing aloft the light when you enter upon your public activity, but on being lights yourselves. You are to be such not by immediate, but by mediate illumination. Let us now pass on to our subject.

We finished our consideration of the first part of Thesis VIII, which declares that the Word of God is not rightly divided if the Law is preached to such as are already alarmed over their sins. We proceed to the second part of the thesis, which tells us that the Word of God is not rightly divided if the Gospel is preached to such as live securely in their sins.

The latter error is as dangerous as the former. Incalculable damage is done if the consolations of the Gospel are offered to secure sinners, or if one preaches to a multitude in such a manner that secure sinners in the audience, by the preacher's fault, imagine that the comfort of the Gospel is meant for them. A preacher who does this may preach crowds of people into hell instead of into heaven. No, the Gospel is not intended for secure sinners. We cannot, of course, prevent secure sinners from coming into our churches and hearing the Gospel, and it devolves upon the preacher to offer the entire comfort of the Gospel in all its sweetness, how-

ever, in such a manner that secure sinners realize that the comfort is not intended for them. The whole manner of the preacher's presentation must make them realize that fact. Let me offer you a few proof-texts from Scripture for what I have said.

Matt. 7, 6 our Lord says to His disciples: *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you.* A remarkable utterance! What is meant by "that which is holy"? Nothing else than the Word of Christ. What is meant by "pearls"? The consolation of the Gospel, with the grace, righteousness, and salvation which it proclaims. Of these things we are not to speak to dogs, that is, to enemies of the Gospel; nor to swine, that is, to such as want to remain in their sins and are seeking their heaven and their bliss in the filth of their sins.

Isaiah says, chap. 26, 10: *Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness. In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.* It is quite useless to offer mercy to the godless. They imagine either that they do not need it or that they already have all of it. The trifling sins, they say, of which they are guilty have long been forgiven, and grass has grown over them. To a person of this stripe I am not to preach the Gospel; in other words, I am not to offer him mercy, — for that is what preaching the Gospel means, — because he will not be benefited by it. A wicked person, who wants to remain in his sins, whether they be gross or refined sins, — for the devil can bind men not only with the ropes of filthy, gross sins, but also with such delicate threads as pride, envy, lovelessness, — such a wicked person, Isaiah says, does "not behold the majesty of the Lord." He does not see what a great treasure is offered him. He does not understand the doctrine of salvation by grace; either he spurns it, or he shamefully misapplies it. He thinks: "If mere faith is all that is necessary for my salvation, my sins, too, are forgiven. I can remain such as I am, and I shall still go to heaven. I, too, believe in my Lord Jesus Christ." The preacher who is to blame when secure sinners misapply the Gospel loads himself with a great guilt and responsibility before God.

Prov. 27, 7 we read: *The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.* You may set screened honey before a person who has eaten his fill, and even this dainty food will nauseate him, while it is relished by a hungry person. The Gospel which is sweeter than honey and the honey-

comb is to be preached only to hungry souls. The "bitter thing," that is, the Law, is for those who are not hungry.

A pattern after which we are to model our preaching we find, in the first place, in our dear Lord Jesus Christ. Observing His conduct in the Gospel records, we find that, whenever He met with secure sinners, — and such the self-righteous Pharisees in those days certainly were, — He had not a drop of comfort for them, but called them serpents and a vipers' brood, denounced a tenfold woe against them, revealed their abominable hypocrisy, assigned them to perdition, and told them that they would not escape eternal damnation. Although He knew that these very persons would nail Him to the cross, He fearlessly told them the truth. That is a point to be noted by preachers. Though knowing in advance that they will share the fate of the Lord Jesus, they must preach the Law in all its severity to secure, reckless sinners, to hypocrites and men who are their enemies. I do not mean to say that we are able to endure what our Lord endured; we cannot drink the cup that He drained. But we shall feel the enmity of people. They will either oppose us openly or plot against us continually in secret. But there is no way out of this dilemma. Whenever the preacher faces this class of people, he dare not preach anything else than the Law to them. Moreover, when he preaches before a multitude, his hearers must get the impression that what he says does not apply to all of them indiscriminately, but to the would-be righteous, who claim the Gospel for themselves.

True, our Lord says: "Come unto Me, *all*," but He immediately adds: "ye that labor and are heavy laden." Thus He serves notice upon secure sinners that He is not inviting them. They would only ridicule Him if He were to lay His spiritual, heavenly treasures before them.

On a certain occasion a rich young man approached Jesus and said to Him: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Jesus declined the title "Good Master" because it would have put Him in the same class with the self-righteous young man, who considered himself a "good master." That rich young man was not sincere in addressing the Lord thus. If he had regarded Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world, if he had believed in Christ and *for that reason* had called Him "Good Master," it would have been quite proper. But because he merely meant to offer the Lord a bit of flattery, Christ declined the title and turned to the young man with the challenge: "Keep the commandments." When the young man asked,

"Which?" Jesus said, "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother, and Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The young man replied: "All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" He meant to say: "If Thou hast no other teachings to propose, Thou art not such a wise man as some consider Thee to be. What Thou hast told me I have known for a long time." How does Christ answer the young man's last question? Does He say, "You lack faith?" By no means; since He is dealing with a miserable, secure and self-righteous person, He does not preach one word of Gospel to him. Though knowing in advance, by reason of His omniscience, that all His efforts would be in vain, He felt that He must first bring him to a realization of his spiritual misery. God, in His love, does many things that to us may seem useless in order that on Judgment Day no man may have an excuse for not coming to faith in Christ. God will say to many: "This and that I did for you, but you spurned Me." Jesus, accordingly, said to the rich young man: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me." Now the record states: "When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions." He departed with an accusing conscience, which, no doubt, told him: "That is indeed a different doctrine from the one I used to hear. What He tells me I cannot do. I have become too greatly attached to my possessions. I would rather forfeit my fellowship with Him than do what He says. I am not going to roam the country with Him like a beggar." Probably his conscience also testified to him that according to the teaching of Christ he was damned, that hell was his goal. That was the effect which the Lord had intended to produce in dealing with this young man. Whether he was converted later, we do not know, nor is it of any consequence here. The point is that in this episode we have an example to guide us when we are dealing with such as are still secure and self-righteous. True, we cannot issue orders such as Christ, the Lord of lords, issued. But there are enough questions that we can ask to make a person of this kind realize that he is still deeply steeped in sins and a lost creature.

This episode with the rich young man is recorded Matt. 19. A similar episode with a lawyer is recorded in Luke 10.

The apostles, we find, observed the same practise as their Lord

and Master. They first preached the Law, and with such force that their hearers were cut to the quick.

Let us examine Acts 2. In his first Pentecostal sermon, Peter first fastened the murder of Christ upon his hearers, and that charge went home. They were frightened and asked: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And now Peter says to them: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Preaching the Gospel to them, he tells them that they can have forgiveness of all their sins, even of the worst ones. That was the general practise of the apostles everywhere, not only in Jerusalem, but also in Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, etc. Everywhere they preached repentance first and then faith; for they knew that everywhere they were, as a rule, facing secure sinners who had not yet realized their most miserable, sinful condition. However, they did not only apply the Law sternly to those who had not yet heard anything about the Christian religion, but also to those who pretended to be Christians, but were living securely in their sins.

There is a remarkable instance of their practise in the two concluding chapters of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. The holy apostle writes: "I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not; lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults." 2 Cor. 12, 20. He means to say: "You will imagine that I am going to preach the Gospel to you. But you will be surprised when I come and you will hear me preach." Among the things that he is going to preach he does not mention knavery, fornication, theft, blasphemy, murder, but all such sins, especially hypocrisy, as are still found in all Christian congregations. He proceeds, v. 21: "And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed." They were not at that time living in fornication and uncleanness, but they had formerly lived in these sins. They had become Christians by a process of reasoning, but had not truly repented of their sins. They professed the Christian religion with their lips, but their faith was not faith of the heart. They had not been regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit. Continuing, the apostle says: "This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. I told you before, and I foretell you, as if I were present, the second time;

and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare." 2 Cor. 13, 1. 2.

We have here an excellent example for a preacher to follow. When people begin to engage in all manner of sinful practises with impunity and imagine that everybody will have to regard them as good Christians provided they attend church and go to Communion, the pastor must say to himself: "It is time that I lay down the Law to my people, lest I live in careless ease while my hearers are going to perdition and lest they rise up to accuse me on the Last Day and say: You are the cause why we have to suffer eternal torment."

The apostle had to reflect that, when he resumed his ministry in the Corinthian congregation, he would still find secure members whom he would have to rouse. In those godless, sodomitical times the apostle did not care whether the people would turn against him and become his enemies. He told them in advance that he was not going to spare them. He would tell to their very faces that eternal damnation was awaiting them unless they would repent; he would rebuke them as being people who had been found out as continuing to sin against their conscience and yet claimed to be Christians.

Accordingly, we may not preach the Gospel, but must preach the Law to secure sinners. We must preach them into hell before we can preach them into heaven. By our preaching our hearers must be brought to the point of death before they can be restored to life by the Gospel. They must be made to realize that they are sick unto death before they can be restored to health by the Gospel. First their own righteousness must be laid bare to them, so that they may see of what filthy rags it consists, and then, by the preaching of the Gospel, they are to be robed in the garment of the righteousness of Christ. They must first be induced to say from the heart: "I, a lost and condemned creature," as the Catechism puts it, in order that they be induced, next, to exclaim joyfully: "Oh, blessed man that I am!" They must first be reduced to nothing by the Law in order that they may be made to be something, to the praise of the glory of God, by the Gospel.

We cannot, indeed, prescribe to sinners a certain *degree* of penitence; for an examination of the Holy Scriptures on this point reveals the fact that the degree of penitence, with those persons whose conversion has been recorded, has been quite different. But every person must have experienced something of the bitterness of penitence, or he will never even begin to relish the sweetness of the

Gospel. *In leading a person to salvation, God may permit him to obtain faith without previously passing through a great deal of anguish and fear; but He always compensates for that later.* Those whom God in His mercy has led quickly to faith and joy in their Savior must by that same mercy be merged again and again in genuine sorrow over their sins lest they fall away. Time-believers have been described by the Lord as follows: the seed of the divine Word promptly takes root in them, causing faith to spring up in them rapidly. They receive the Word with joy, but are not profited by it. Unless the rocky subsoil in their hearts has been pulverized by the Law, the sweet Gospel is of no benefit to them.

It is indeed a common observation that all those who have passed through great and profound sorrow at the beginning have become the best and most stalwart Christians. Those who in their youth were deeply merged beneath floods of anguish and sorrow on account of their salvation turned out to be the best pastors and theologians.

This is illustrated by the instance of our beloved Luther. The reformation of the Church, the greatest task that any one could have accomplished in that age, had been entrusted to him. Without giving him any premonition, God prepared him for this task; not by making him very smart and enduing him with a keen knowledge of men or by giving him immediately a very clear understanding of the Word of God, — for he did not possess such understanding at the start and did not obtain it until the Holy Spirit kindled the true light in his soul, — but by forcing him upon his knees in anguish and terror, so that he was in danger every moment of yielding to blasphemous thoughts. That, however, was the proper school from which the future Reformer was to be graduated.

Another instance is that of Flacius, who, beyond question, was the greatest theologian of his time, second only to Luther. Pity that he fell into error at a later time and would not accept correction. He, too, was for a long time at the brink of despair. Luther ministered to him until he was in a condition at last to receive the consolation of the Gospel.

Furthermore, we read that John Gerhard, one of the very greatest dogmaticians, during his college days was for more than a year in deepest anguish and sorrow. Nobody succeeded in raising him up, until John Arndt, his spiritual physician, healed him with the comfort of the Gospel. When Gerhard had emerged from this

infernal anguish and realized that he was a miserable sinner, he became a great man.

Much of the life-story of all great theologians, as a rule, has not been published and will not be known except in the hereafter. Could we know it now, we would observe that all those great men became great after previously having been made small and worthless. They became the great men in the kingdom of God and the great instruments of God that they are acknowledged to be after they had been freed from their anguish and distress, began to believe the Gospel, and thus became new men.

A young man who has arrived at "faith" in God's Word by a sterile conviction of his intellect is a pitiful sight. If he is an acute reasoner, he can easily be led to accept all sorts of errors and become a heretic, because he has never passed through any real anguish of soul. But any one who has experienced the power of the Word and passed through the ordeal of genuine and serious penitence will not easily slip into the hidden spiritual sink-holes, for he has been made wary by experience. When his reason begins to hold forth to him, he clings to the Word and bids his reason be silent. God grant that you have not only been polite listeners to my remarks and resolve to put them to practise in the ministry, but that you also have experienced them in your own hearts.

Let me submit a few testimonies from *Luther* on this matter. First one from his *Commentary on Chapters in Exodus* (St. L. Ed. III, 858f.): "The Gospel is not fit to be preached to gross, vulgar, reckless sinners, who spend their lives without a thought of the hereafter; on the contrary, it is a consolation intended for afflicted souls. Matt. 11, 28. For it is a delicate food, which requires a hungry soul. Accordingly, the blessed Virgin Mary sings in her Magnificat, Luke 1, 53: 'He hath filled the hungry with good things.' Otherwise the rude masses will fall upon it, all claiming to be evangelical and Christian brethren, and then start schisms and all sorts of distress. They are headed wherever the devil leads them. A Christian is not reckless, wild, and vulgar, but his conscience is timid, low-spirited, and despondent. He feels the gnawing of his sin and trembles at the wrath of God, the power of the devil, and the thought of death. A heart bruised and crushed like this relishes the Lord Christ greatly. Furthermore, redemption from sin, death, devil, and hell are much appreciated by those who are being swallowed up by death, who are feeling their distress and yearn for rest. They obtain rest if they have believing hearts; but they feel at the same time what a frail thing their Old Adam is."

When I reprove a person and he becomes angry with me, he shows that he is not a true Christian; for a Christian receives reproof meekly, even if the reproof is uncalled for. He is not greatly surprised that people should charge him with wrong-doing, knowing that no person who is still in his natural state can be expected to do good. If he knows himself to be innocent of the charge, he says, God be praised! I am not guilty.

It is an important remark of Luther when he states that those are certainly no Christians who do not feel the gnawing of their sin, are not wrestling with it, and are even apt to ask, Why, what wrong am I doing? He who speaks thus is in a sorry condition. Were he a true Christian, he would say: "Indeed, my sins go over my head. That was my plight, not only in the days when I was not converted, but it is still my plight. I do not believe this merely because I read about it in my Bible, but I experience every day what a wicked thing my heart is and how frail my Old Adam."

Furthermore, in his treatise *Concerning Councils and Churches, Luther* writes (St. L. Ed. XVI, 2241 f.): "My friends the Antinomians preach exceedingly well — and I cannot but believe that they do so with great earnestness — concerning the mercy of Christ, forgiveness of sin, and other contents of the article of redemption. But they flee from this inference as from the devil, that they must tell the people about the Third Article, of sanctification, that is, of the new life in Christ. For they hold that we must not terrify people and make them sorrowful, but must always preach to them the comfort of grace in Christ and the forgiveness of sin. They tell us to avoid, for God's sake, such statements as these: 'Listen, you want to be a Christian while you are an adulterer, a fornicator, a swill-belly, full of pride, avarice, usurious practises, envy, revenge, malice, etc., and mean to continue in these sins?' On the contrary, they tell us that this is the proper way to speak: 'Listen, you are an adulterer, fornicator, miser, or addicted to some other sin. Now, if you will only believe, you are saved and need not dread the Law, for Christ has fulfilled all.' Tell me, prithee, does not this amount to conceding the premise and denying the conclusion? *Verily, it amounts to this, that Christ is taken away and made worthless in the same breath with which He is most highly extolled.* It means to say yes and no in the same matter. For a Christ who died for sinners who, after receiving forgiveness, will not quit their sin nor lead a new life, is worthless and does not exist. According to the logic of Nestorius and Eutyches these people, in masterful fashion, preach a Christ who is, and is not, the Redeemer. *They*

are excellent preachers of the Easter truth, but miserable preachers of the truth of Pentecost. For there is nothing in their preaching concerning sanctification of the Holy Ghost and about being quickened into a new life. They preach only about the redemption of Christ. It is proper to extol Christ in our preaching; but Christ is the Christ and has acquired redemption from sin and death for this very purpose that the Holy Spirit should change our Old Adam into a new man, that we are to be dead unto sin and live unto righteousness, as Paul teaches Rom. 6, 2 ff., and that we are to begin this change and increase in this new life here and consummate it hereafter. For Christ has gained for us not only *grace* (*gratiam*), but also the *gift* (*donum*) of the Holy Ghost, so that we obtain from Him not only *forgiveness* of sin, but also the *ceasing* from sin. Any one, therefore, who does not cease from his sin, but continues in his former evil way must have obtained a different Christ, from the Antinomians. *The genuine Christ is not with them, even if they cry with the voice of all angels, Christ! Christ! They will have to go to perdition with their new Christ.*"

The Antinomians, you know, were followers of John Agricola, of Eisleben, who taught that the Law must not be preached in the Christian churches because it belongs in the court-house, on gallows' hill, etc. Luther has given an extreme description of Antinomian preaching. None of you will readily imitate that method, but it is easy to fall into something like it. When you are about to comfort people effectually who are in anguish and distress because they imagine that their sins are too great, that they have sinned too long a time, etc., then you must proceed to glorify grace and say: "Though you had committed all sins that have ever been committed on this earth, though you were Judases and Cains and had persecuted Jesus, you need not despair of the mercy of God." However, this correct statement must be delivered in such a manner that reckless sinners will feel that the statement applies only to such sinners as are alarmed and in distress over their sins and not to people like themselves, who think that, after all, matters will not be so bad as the preachers say. Be careful, then, for God's sake, when preaching the Gospel, not to make sinners secure and thus become seducers unto sin and defenders of sin.

Luther's remark about the class of sinners for whom Christ died must not be interpreted to mean that Christ did not die for all sinners. Luther manifestly means to say that Christ did not die to make sinners secure.

Luther's remarks about Easter and Pentecost preachers deserve to be remembered. It is well if on Easter Day you emphasize with great force, and expatiate on, the victory of Christ over sin, death, devil, and hell. But you must also be good Pentecostal preachers and say to your hearers: "Repent; for then the Holy Spirit will come with His grace and comfort, enlighten, and sanctify you." We shall never attain to perfect sanctification in this life, but we must make a beginning and progress in this endeavor. For he that does not increase, decreases, and he that decreases will ultimately cease entirely using what God has given him. Finally, he will be a dead branch on the vine.

What a stern utterance are these remarks against the Antinomians by Luther, who is known throughout the Christian Church as the greatest witness for the magnitude and riches of the grace of God in Christ, and who, as few others in the Christian Church, had the gift of speaking words of comfort to men. You see, when it is incumbent upon him to preach the Law, he is stern and incisive; he spares no one; he brings the staff Bands down on all the secure.

In his *Instruction for Visitors,* written in 1528, *Luther* writes (St. L. Ed. X, 1636f.): "As regards doctrine, we find, among other things, this to be the chief fault that, while some preach the faith by which we are to be made righteous, they do not give a sufficient explanation how we are to *attain* faith. Thus nearly all of them omit an integral part of the Christian doctrine, without which no one can understand what faith is or what deserves the name of faith. For Christ says, Luke 24, 47, that 'repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name.' However, nowadays many speak only of forgiveness of sin and say little or nothing regarding repentance *notwithstanding the fact that without repentance there is no remission of sins, nor can remission of sins be understood without repentance.* If remission of sins without repentance is preached, the people imagine that they have already forgiveness of sins, and thereby they are made secure and unconcerned. *This is a greater error and sin than all errors of former times,* and it is verily to be feared that we are in that danger which Christ points out when He says, Matt. 12, 45: 'The last state of that man shall be worse than the first.' Accordingly, we have instructed and admonished the pastors to do their duty and preach the Gospel entire, not one part without the other. For God says, Deut. 4, 2, that nothing is to be added to His Word nor anything to be taken from it. Our preachers nowadays scold the Pope for

having made many additions to Scripture, which, alas! is but too true. But these men who do not preach repentance tear a great portion out of the Scriptures and meanwhile talk about the eating of meats and such other trifling matters. Of course, on the proper occasion these matters are not to be passed over in silence; for Christian liberty must be defended against tyranny. But what else does the practise of the preachers to whom I have referred mean than 'straining at gnats and swallowing camels,' as Christ expresses it Matt. 23, 24? We have admonished them, therefore, to exhort the people diligently and frequently unto repentance, contrition, and sorrow over their sin and fear of the Judgment of God. We have warned them not to omit from their teaching the important and necessary element of repentance; for both John and Christ rebuke the Pharisees more sharply for their saintly hypocrisy than ordinary sinners. In like manner, pastors are to reprove the common people for their gross sins, but make their exhortations to repentance much sterner wherever they discover spurious sanctity."

Shouting at masses of people, "Believe, only believe in Christ, and you will be saved," leaves them in ignorance as to the preacher's object. The ax of the Law must first come down on them. When they hear the thundering of the Law and look up at the preacher startled, they begin to reflect: "If the preacher is right, what is to become of us? Woe upon us!" Then they are ready for the consolation of the Gospel.

Luther's statement about the greatness of the Antinomian error as surpassing the errors of former times deserves to be noted. Before Luther began his activity, the Law alone held sway. The poor people were in anguish and terror. When Luther had come to understand the Gospel, he preached it in all its sweetness to these poor, stricken sinners. He was misunderstood by many, who concluded that, to preach like Luther, they must preach faith, justification, and righteousness without the deeds of the Law every Sunday. This practise of theirs Luther denounced as a greater error than the error of the papists. By preaching faith only and saying nothing about repentance, the preacher leads his hearers to that awful condition where they imagine they are not in need of repentance, and finally they get so that they are past help.

Note also this point in Luther's remarks, that, while it is indeed necessary to preach against gross vices, yet that is not what is meant by forcibly preaching the Law. Such preaching produces nothing but Pharisees.

FOURTEENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(January 16, 1885.)

As regards the difference between the Lutheran and the Reformed Church, my friends, the Lutheran people, at least in former times, imagined that the whole difference was this, that in reciting the Lord's Prayer in German, the Lutheran put the word "Father" first, the Reformed the word "Our" and that in the Lord's Supper, wafers, which are not broken, are used in the Lutheran Church, while the Reformed churches use ordinary bread, which they break at the distribution or before. For this horrible ignorance the unfaithful ministers of our Church are to be blamed. They have shamefully neglected their people.

In view of this ignorance it is, of course, not surprising that these poor Lutherans finally yielded to overtures for a union with the Reformed. Recently, however, a change has taken place: the violently enforced establishment of the United Church in the very country where it was attempted first, in Prussia, has brought about a reconsideration by our beloved Lutheran people of the points of difference between the Reformed and the Lutheran Church. In 1817, when the Union was inaugurated, *Claus Harms,* pastor and professor at the University of Kiel, published a new series of Ninety-five Theses for use at the celebration of the Tercentenary of the Reformation. In Thesis 95 he says: "A copulation is now contemplated, which is to enrich that poor handmaiden, the Lutheran Church." However, he adds this warning: "Do not attempt it on Luther's grave; his bones will take on new life, and then the Lord have mercy on you!" His prophecy has been fulfilled. Nowadays any Lutheran child that has received at least a passable instruction in the Christian doctrine knows that there is indeed a great difference, involving the principal articles of Christian doctrine, between the Lutheran and the Reformed Church. To-day the Lutheran people are well informed on this point: Lutherans adhere firmly to the words of Christ, forever true: "This *is* My body; this *is* My blood." Lutherans, accordingly, believe that the body and blood of Christ are substantially and truly present in the Holy Supper and are administered to, and received by, the communicants, while those clear words, plain as daylight, are interpreted by the Reformed to mean: "This signifies the body of Christ; this signifies His blood." Accordingly, the Reformed contend that the body and blood of Christ are removed from the Holy Supper as far as the heavens are from the earth, because they are limited to the

heavenly mansions and His return to earth is not to be expected until the Last Day.

Nowadays all Lutheran people know that according to Scripture, the Book of eternal truth, Holy Baptism is the washing of regeneration, a means by which regeneration is effected from on high through the Holy Spirit; while the Reformed contend that Baptism is merely a sign, symbol, or representation of something that has previously taken place in a person.

Nowadays all Lutheran people know that the human nature of Christ, through its union with the divine nature, has received also divine attributes, namely, that omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and the honor of adoration have been communicated to it; while the Reformed contend that between the man Christ and other men there is a difference only of degree, namely, that Christ has received greater gifts. However, even the highest gifts which His human nature possesses are claimed to be creature gifts, the same as in other creatures.

Nowadays all Lutheran people know that according to the Holy Scriptures the saving grace of the Father is universal; so is the redemption of the Son, and likewise the effective calling of the Holy Spirit through the Word; while the teaching of the Reformed Church on these three points is particularistic, because the Reformed most emphatically contend that God has created the greater part of the human race unto eternal damnation and has accordingly assigned them even in eternity to everlasting death. In the clear light of the precious, saving Gospel this is an appalling, a horrible doctrine.

To be brief, every Lutheran knows nowadays that the difference between the Lutheran and the Reformed Church is fundamental: it lies, not on the circumference, but in the very center of the Christian doctrine.

What is the reason, then, that in spite of these facts many who claim to be Lutherans have allowed themselves to become enmeshed in the unionistic net and, while claiming to be Lutherans, calmly remain in the Union, which is nothing but an emergency device? They are in a Church that has not been established by Christ, but by an earthly king; a church in which not all speak the same things nor hold the same views, as the apostle requires in 1 Cor. 1; a Church in which there is not that one faith, one Baptism, one hope, which the apostle, Eph. 4, predicates of the Church of Jesus Christ. What is the reason? It is nothing else than the notion that, spite of the many and grave errors of the Reformed Church,

there is an agreement between it and the Lutheran Church in the principal points. It is claimed that the relation between these two churches is entirely different from that existing between the Lutheran and the Romish Church. There is truth in the claim mentioned last; but if the Reformed Church were in agreement with us in the main points, — a consummation devoutly to be wished! — it would speedily reach an agreement with us also in the few points of minor importance. But what the Reformed Church lacks is just this — it cannot correctly answer the question, "What must I do to be saved?" In the very doctrine of justification, the cardinal doctrine of the Lutheran Church, the Reformed Church is not in agreement with us; it does not point the right way to grace and salvation. Few there are in our day who perceive this point. All the Reformed, and the sects that are derived from the Reformed Church, affirm that a person is saved by grace alone. But the moment you examine their practise, you immediately discover that, while they hold this truth in theory, they do not put it into effect, but rather point in the opposite direction.

The thesis which we are approaching to-night invites a discussion of this subject.

Thesis IX.

In the fifth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when sinners who have been struck down and terrified by the Law are directed, not to the Word and the Sacraments, but to their own prayers and wrestlings with God in order that they may win their way into a state of grace; in other words, when they are told to keep on praying and struggling until they feel that God has received them into grace.

The doctrine which is denounced in this thesis is common to all the Reformed and to the sects of Reformed origin, including the Baptists, the Methodists, the Evangelical Alliance, the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians. All these are only branches of the great tree of the Reformed Church. The pure evangelical doctrine of the way in which a poor, alarmed sinner arrives at the assurance that God is gracious to him is not heard among these people; this way is not shown by any of these sects.

In order to obtain a divine assurance regarding the proper way of rightly dividing the Word, so as to meet the errors named in our thesis, let us examine a few pertinent examples recorded in Scripture. Let us observe the holy apostles, who were filled with the Holy Spirit and, being prompted by Him, no doubt divided the

Word of God rightly and showed alarmed sinners the right way to rest and peace and assurance of their state of grace with God. In order to remove every possible doubt, let us examine the treatment which the apostles accorded the greatest and grossest sinners.

In Acts 2 we have a record of the way in which the Apostle Peter treated people who a few weeks previously had cried, "Crucify, crucify Him!" These recreants, who at the tribunal of Pilate had shouted, "'Away with Him!' Hustle the cursed wretch to the gibbet! We shall gladly exchange Him for Barabbas!" had been led by curiosity to the house where the outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place. They heard the roaring of the mighty wind and came to investigate the phenomenon. We observe that Peter, to begin with, reproved those who mockingly said the apostles were filled with new wine. He showed them that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was nothing but the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy. He next rehearses the story of the suffering, death, resurrection, and final ascension of Jesus, concluding with these words: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ." Though expressed in a few words, that was a terrible Law sermon. Accordingly, we are told in v. 37: "Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart." When these words of the apostle struck their hearts, they had the sensation of having been stabbed there with a dagger. They trembled; they were horrified; and the Holy Spirit drove the apostle's thrust home and made them realize what a terrible sin they had committed by crucifying their own Messiah. "And they said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

How does the apostle act in this instance? Does he say: "You will have to make a personal effort to amend your conduct; you must come to a still more penitent knowledge of your sins; you must go down on your knees and cry for mercy; perhaps God will then help you and receive you into grace"? Nothing of the kind. He said to them: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." *Μετανοεῖτε* ("repent ye") means: "Change your minds." It refers quite plainly to what is called the second part of repentance, *viz.*, faith. The term is here used in the figure of synecdoche, because the Law had already done its work upon these hearers. Accordingly, it was far from the Apostle Peter's mind to bring about their salvation by hurling them into still greater distress, anguish, and terror. Now that their heart had been pricked, he was satisfied. They

were now prepared to hear the most blessed Gospel and receive it into their hearts. Therefore the apostle now addressed them thus: "You must change your minds and believe the Gospel of the Crucified One; you must dismiss all your errors and be baptized at once in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." This answer of the apostle testified to them when they received Baptism: "Your sins are forgiven. You are now in a right relation to God. Your terrible sins are remembered no more." The apostle adds these words: "And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"; and the record of this incident is concluded thus: "For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord, our God, shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

That is the whole story. Other demands the apostle did not make; his hearers were only to listen to his words and take comfort in these soothing words of consolation, this promise of the forgiveness of their sins, of life and salvation. We are not told about measures such as the sects in our day employ. More about these anon.

That was the first sermon delivered by Peter, coming, so to speak, fresh from the forge of the Holy Spirit. He went to work with the most intense ardor of faith and with a single sermon gained three thousand souls, to whom he brought rest and peace and the assurance of salvation. In v. 42 we are told: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Hence, theirs was not a trainsient fervor, such as that frequently produced by itinerant enthusiasts in our day at their revivals. No; their hearts had been profoundly stirred and completely changed. They rejoiced and cheerfully took upon themselves all ignominy and persecution, all sufferings which the Christians of that time had to endure.

To this first example illustrating the apostles' practise let me add a second one: the conversion of the jailer at Philippi, which is recorded Acts 16. While we met with Jews in the first instance, we are here told about a heathen, and a very godless heathen at that. In vv. 19 and 20 we read: "And when her masters" (the masters of the damsel from whom Paul had expelled the soothsaying spirit of divination) "saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they

caught Paul and Silas and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being *Jews,* do exceedingly trouble our city." That was their politic move — the Jews were universally hated and despised. They raised this further charge, v. 21: "And teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive neither to observe, being Romans." These noble people claimed to be baked from better dough than any other nation. The record proceeds: "And the multitude rose up together against them. And the magistrates rent off their clothes and commanded to beat them" (mark you, without their having been given a due hearing). "And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely; who, having received such charge, thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks." Vv. 22. 24. The jailer had not been ordered to apply the severe measures last named. He did not know whether the apostles had been lawfully committed to jail, but he did not care. He was an inhuman brute.

The story continues: "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them." V. 25. Undoubtedly the jailer, too, heard them, and it surely must have made a powerful impression on him. Very likely he had expected them to sit in their cell gnashing their teeth and cursing the jailer; instead he hears them chanting praises to God. He must have mused: "These are queer men; never before did I have prisoners in this house of correction like these."

And now we read: "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep and seeing the prison-doors open, he drew out his sword and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled." Vv. 26. 27. Inattention to duty was no joke under the government of the Romans. If prisoners escaped from jail, the keeper of the prison was held responsible. In the case of especially dangerous characters the jailer was apt to be punished with death if they escaped. Now, this jailer did not believe in a God who would judge him. Accordingly he calculated thus: Since I am to be sentenced to death anyway, what is life worth to me? I prefer to be my own executioner.

"But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." V. 28. Imagine the impression that cry made on the jailer! He had thrust the apostles into the inner prison,

and instead of bearing him a grudge for that and plotting revenge upon him, they arrest his suicidal hand by shouting to him as they did.

From the psalms the apostles had sung the jailer had very likely understood this much, that they were men who wished to tell the people how to find a happy fate beyond Hades. In his great distress he now beseeches the apostles: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" V. 30. If the apostles had been fanatics, they would have said to him: "My dear friend, this is no easy matter. Before a godless, reckless man like you can be saved, an elaborate and extensive cure is necessary, which we shall prescribe to you." Not a word of this. They behold in the jailer a person fit to receive the Gospel. He was as godless as before; he had not yet conceived a hatred of sin. He says nothing about that. All he wants is to escape the punishment of sin and obtain a happy, blessed fate beyond the grave.

Notwithstanding this we read: "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house. And they spake unto him the Word of the Lord and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." Vv. 31—33. *That same night* the jailer is converted, obtains faith and the assurance that he is accepted with God, and reconciled. He is become a beloved child of God.

What measures did the apostles apply to him? Nothing beyond proclaiming the Gospel to him without any condition attached to it. They tell him unqualifiedly: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." That makes the apostles' practise plain. In every instance where their word had produced faith, they administered Baptism immediately. They did not say: "We have to take you through an extensive course of instruction and expound to you accurately and thoroughly all the articles of the Christian creed. After that, we shall have to put you on probation to see whether you can become an approved Christian." Nothing of the sort. The jailer asks to be baptized because he knows that is the means for receiving him into the kingdom of Christ; and they promptly administer Baptism to him.

Compare with this apostolic practise that of the Reformed Church in our day. (I am referring to all the sects that have sprung from the Reformed Church.) If they were to see a Lutheran minister adopting the practise of the apostles, they would cry out: "How can that godless and lax preacher act that way?

Why, he ought first to impress on the sinner that he must feel the grace of God in his heart. Instead of that he comforts him and even baptizes him." However, that is the Biblical method, and being Biblical, it is the Lutheran method; for the Lutheran Church is nothing else than the Bible Church; it does not deviate from the Bible, does not take aught away or add to it, but stands squarely upon the Word of God. That is the leading principle which the Lutheran Church carries out in all its teachings and in its practise.

In conclusion we read: "And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." He had a good reason for rejoicing. He meant to declare that, while formerly he had no God and was without hope in this world, he had now found God and a Savior who had redeemed him, having purchased him with his precious God's blood, and had given him the promise that he would come again and receive him into the Kingdom of Glory.

That is the second example from the apostles' practise, which exhibits their method of procedure when it devolved upon them to lead a person to the assurance of the grace of God. Let me now introduce the instance of the conversion of the Apostle Paul himself, recounted very beautifully by himself Acts 22.

How was this abominable man, who had horribly persecuted the Christians, converted? Speaking from the Temple stairs to the excited Jewish mob, he begins the story of his conversion thus: "Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense which I now make unto you. (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence.)" Vv. 1. 2. Nearly on every occasion when he appeared in public, especially before an audience of Jews, Paul told the story of his conversion. On this occasion he addressed them in Hebrew, to arouse their attention. Few people at that time understood Hebrew well, but Paul, being a learned man, understood it well. In the complete silence that now fell upon his audience not a word was lost to his hearers. He told them: "I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel and taught according to the perfect manner of the Law of the fathers and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest doth bear me witness and all the estate of the elders; from whom also I received letters unto the brethren and went unto Damascus to bring them

which were there bound unto Jerusalem for to be punished." Vv. 3—5.

Paul classifies the Jews in their present state with himself in his unconverted state. He, too, had persecuted the new religion, forcing its adherents by painful tortures to renounce and abominate Christ.

He proceeds: "And it came to pass that, as I made my journey and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And I answered, Who art Thou, Lord? And He said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me." (Paul was to know that *he* was meant; he alone heard the voice. For that reason, too, Jesus addressed him by name.) "And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do." Vv. 6—10.

He was to be converted by nothing else than the Word. The Savior, at this point, does not preach conversion to him. He is to learn through men what he is to do to be saved.

"And when I could not see for the glory of that light," Paul proceeds, "being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the Law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, came unto me and stood and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him." Vv. 11—13.

Ananias had had a vision from the Lord in which he had been told what to say when he would see Saul. In view of the instruction he had received he immediately, upon entering, addressed Saul as "brother."

Continuing his account, Paul relates: "And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee that thou shouldest know His will and see that Just One and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Vv. 14—16.

Ananias, then, does not say: "First you must pray until you have a sensation of inward grace." No, he tells him: Having come to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus, your first step must be to

receive Baptism for the washing away of your sins. And then call upon the Lord Jesus. That is the true order of saving grace: not praying first for the grace of God, but after one has learned to know the grace of God. Prior to that he cannot pray acceptably.

In this instance the practise of the Lord Himself is exhibited to us. He surely knows how to deal with poor sinners. As soon as Saul became alarmed about his sins, Jesus approached him with His consolation. He did not require him to experience all sorts of feelings, but promptly proclaimed to him the Word of Grace. That shows a true minister of Christ how to proceed when his object is to lead sinners who have been crushed by the Law to the assurance of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

What, now, is the method of the sects? The very contrary of this. True, they also preach the Law first with great sternness, which is quite proper. We do the same, following the method of the apostles and of Christ. The only wrong feature in this part of their preaching is their depiction of the infernal torments, which is usually done in such a drastic manner as to engage the imagination rather than to make their words sink into the depth of the heart. True, they frequently preach excellent sermons on the Law with its awful threatenings; only they do not bring out its spiritual meaning. The faulty effect in the Law preaching of most sects is this: instead of reducing their hearers to the condition where they profess themselves poor, lost, and condemned sinners, who have deserved everlasting wrath, they put them in a state of mind which makes them say: "Is it not terrible to hear God uttering such awful threatenings on account of sin?" If you do not lead a man by the Law to the point where he puts off completely the garment of his own righteousness and declares himself a miserable, wicked man, whose heart is sinning day and night with his evil lusts, thoughts, desires, dispositions, and wishes of all kinds, you have not preached the Law aright. A preacher of the Law must make a person distrust himself even in the least matter until his dying hour and keep him confessing that he is a miserable creature, with no record of good deeds except those which God has accomplished through him, spite of the corrupting, deteriorating, and poisoning effects of his own act. If the heart is not put in such condition, the person is not properly prepared for the reception of the Gospel.

But the incorrect preaching of the Law is not the worst feature of the sects. They do not preach the Gospel to such as are alarmed and in anguish. They imagine they would commit the worst sin by immediately offering consolation to such poor souls. They give

them a long list of efforts that they must make in order, if possible, to be received into grace: how long they must pray, how strenuously they must fight and wrestle and cry, until they can say that they feel they have received the Holy Ghost and divine grace and can rise from their knees shouting hallelujahs. In order to accelerate this process in larger gatherings, Methodist preachers induce the brethren and sisters to kneel with the candidate for conversion and cry for the forgiveness of his sins. Sometimes the effort is futile, sometimes the desired result is not attained in weeks and months. If a sincere candidate confesses that he only feels his inability and is full of evil inclinations, he is told that he is still in a sorry condition and that he must continue to wrestle in prayer until he finally experiences a feeling of divine grace. Then he is told to praise God because he is rid of sin; all is well with him, the penitential agony is over, and he has become a child of God's grace.

But the required feeling may rest on a false foundation. It may not be the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart, but a physical effect, produced by the lively presentations of the preacher. That explains why sincere persons who have become believers not infrequently feel one moment that they have found the Lord Jesus, and in the next, that they have lost Him again. Now they imagine that they are in a state of grace; at another time, that they are fallen from grace. What distress is created for such souls in their dying hour when they have no sensation of grace and are worried with the awful thought of damnation and eternal perdition! This may happen oftener than we think. I have no doubt, however, that the Holy Spirit comes to the aid of the poor souls that have been in the hands of such bad practitioners and makes them cast all reliance upon their own laboring, wrestling, and striving overboard, throw themselves into the arms of the free grace of God, and die in peace. However, that blessed effect, wherever it occurs, is not due to Methodist preaching, but to the operation of the Holy Spirit spite of Methodist preaching.

We gather from what I have stated that the faulty practise under review is based on three awful errors.

In the first place, the sects neither believe nor teach a real and complete reconciliation of man with God because they regard our heavenly Father as being a God very hard to deal with, whose heart must be softened by passionate cries and bitter tears. That amounts to a denial of Jesus Christ, who has long ago turned the heart of God to men by reconciling the entire world with Him.

God does nothing by halves. In Christ He loves all sinners without exception. The sins of every sinner are canceled. Every debt has been liquidated. There is no longer anything that a poor sinner has to fear when he approaches his heavenly Father, with whom he has been reconciled by Christ.

However, people imagine that, after Christ has done His share, man must still do his, and man is not reconciled to God until both efforts meet. The sects picture reconciliation as consisting in this, that the Savior made God *willing* to save men, provided men would be willing on their part to be reconciled. But that is the reverse of the Gospel. God *is* reconciled. Accordingly, the apostle Paul calls on us: "Be ye reconciled to God." That means: Since God has been reconciled to you by Jesus Christ, grasp the hand which the Father in heaven holds out to you. Moreover, the apostle declares: "If one died for all, then were all dead." 2 Cor. 5, 14. That means: If Christ died for the sins of all men, that is tantamount to all men's dying and making satisfaction for their sins. Therefore nothing at all is required on the part of man to reconcile God; He already is reconciled. Righteousness lies ready; it must not first be achieved by man. If man were to attempt to do so, that would be an awful crime, a battle against grace and against the reconciliation and perfect redemption accomplished by the Son of God.

In the second place, the sects teach false doctrine concerning the Gospel. They regard it as nothing else than an instruction for man, teaching him what he must do to secure the grace of God, while in reality the Gospel is God's proclamation to men: "Ye are redeemed from your sins; ye are reconciled to God; your sins are forgiven." No sectarian preacher dare make this frank statement. If one of them, for instance, Spurgeon, does do it in some of his sermons, it is a Lutheran element in the teaching of the sects and an exception to the rule. Moreover, he is being severely criticized for it as going too far.

In the third place, the sects teach false doctrine concerning faith. They regard it as a quality in man by which he is improved. For that reason they consider faith such an extraordinarily important and salutary matter.

It is true, indeed, that genuine faith changes a person completely. It brings love into a person's heart. Faith cannot be without love, just as little as fire can be without heat. But this quality of faith is not the reason why it justifies us, giving us what Christ has acquired for us, what hence is ours already and only need be

received by us. The Scriptural answer to the question: "What must I do to be saved?" is: "You must believe; hence you are not to do anything at all yourself." In that sense the apostle answered the question when it was addressed to him. He practically told the jailer: "You are to do nothing but accept what God has done for you, and you have it and become a blessed person." That is the precious teaching of the divine Word.

Having this doctrine, what exceedingly happy and blessed people we Lutherans are! This teaching takes us to Christ by a straight route. It opens heaven to us when we feel hell in our hearts. It enables us to obtain grace at any moment without losing time by following a wrong way, striving for grace by our own effort, as we sometimes do with a good intention. We can approach Christ directly and say: "Lord Jesus, I am a poor sinner; I know it; that has been my experience in the past, and when I reflect what is going on in my heart now, I must say, that is still my experience. But Thou hast called me by Thy Gospel. I come to Thee just as I am; for I could come no other way." That is the saving doctrine which the Evangelical Lutheran Church has learned from Christ and the apostles.

Use this doctrine to your own advantage, my friends. It would be awful if one of you would have to retire this evening with the thought in his heart: "I do not know whether God is gracious to me, whether He has accepted me as His child, and whether my sins are forgiven. If God were to call me hence to-night, I would not be sure whether I should die saved." God grant that no one of you will retire in that frame of mind; for he would lie down to rest with the wrath of God abiding on him.

God's disposition towards us is as we picture it to ourselves. If one believes that God is gracious to him, he certainly has a gracious God. If we dress our heavenly Father up as a scarecrow, as a God who is angry with us, we *have* an angry God, and His wrath rests upon us. However, the God that is angry with us has been removed by our Savior; we now have a God who takes pity on us.

I cherish another wish concerning you, to wit, that you may be filled with great cheerfulness to proclaim this most blessed doctrine some day with joy to your congregations. If you had to preach nothing else than sterile ethics, you might consider that a tedious task, yielding meager results. But if you have experienced in your heart what it means to convey to poor, lost, and condemned sinners the consolation of the Gospel and say to them: "Do but

come and believe," — I say, if you believe this and ponder the full meaning of this, you cannot but look forward with joy to the day when you will stand for the first time before your congregations to deliver this august message. Morover, you will surely be forced to say: "I have certainly chosen the most beautiful and glorious calling on earth." For a messenger of good tidings is always welcome. God grant that by His gracious help such may be your good fortune!

FIFTEENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(January 23, 1885.)

My Dear Friends; Beloved in the Lord: —

You know that the papists teach that even godly persons do not enter heaven immediately after death, but before being admitted to the vision of God must first pass through a so-called purgatory, where they are supposed to become purged by fire with horrible torments from sins for which they had not made full atonement. Worse than this, the papists teach that no person, not even a sincere Christian, can be assured in the present life that he is in a state of grace with God, that he has received forgiveness of sins and will go to heaven. Only a few, they say, are excepted from this rule, namely, the holy apostles and extraordinarily great saints, to whom God has given advance information by revealing to them in an extraordinary manner that they will reach the heavenly goal.

This is the doctrine of the Antichrist — absolutely without comfort. You know that our Lutheran Church teaches the very opposite. It is a pity that the great majority of nominal Lutherans, while cherishing a kind of human hope that they are accepted with God, that they have obtained forgiveness of sin, and will be saved, nevertheless have no assurance of these matters. This sad phenomenon proves that such Lutherans, far from having received the Lutheran doctrine into their hearts, have no knowledge of it at all.

How could the Christian doctrine be called the evangel, that is, glad tidings, if those who accept it must be in constant doubt whether their sins are covered, whether God looks upon them as righteous people, and whether they will go to heaven? If even a Christian cannot know what his relation to God is and what his fate will be in eternity, whether damnation or salvation, what difference would there be between a Christian and a heathen, the latter of whom lives without God and without hope in this world?

Does not Holy Scripture say: "Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"? Heb. 11, 1. (Luther translates: "Faith is having a *sure* confidence regarding things hoped for and not doubting things unseen.") Does not our blessed Lord Jesus Christ say: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavey laden, and I will give you rest"? Matt. 11, 28. Does He not say: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst"? John 4, 14. Does He not say: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand"? John 10, 27. 28. If the aforementioned doctrine of doubt were true, would not all these sayings be empty delusions, yea — I shudder to say it! — lies and cheats?

Our dear Lord Jesus Christ requires of His followers that they wrestle with their own flesh and blood, the world, and the devil, and that they be faithful unto death. He requires of them that they renounce all that they have, come to Him, take His cross upon them, deny themselves, and follow Him. He tells them in advance that, if they side with Him, the world will hate them, revile them, and persecute them unto death. If the aforementioned doctrine of doubt were right, who would desire to come to Christ, side with Him, and fight all the great and dreadful battles of this life, following His crimson banner? Who could muster the strength to follow after holiness if he had to doubt whether he will ever reach the heavenly goal? Indeed, any one who has received this doctrine of doubt into his heart is an unhappy man. He remains forever a sorry slave of the Law; he is constantly told by his conscience: "It is not well with you; who can tell what God's thoughts concerning you are, what punishment is awaiting you?"

Unquestionably, this doctrine of doubt is the most horrible error into which a Christian can fall. For it puts Christ, His redemption, and the entire Gospel to shame. It is therefore no jesting matter.

Where are we to look for the root of this error? Nowhere else than in the commingling of Law and Gospel. Let us learn, then, rightly to divide the Word of God, the Law and the Gospel, which the Apostle Paul requires of every servant of the Church of God.

A week ago we gained the conviction that preaching the Word of God, namely, the Gospel, to a person who is sincerely alarmed

over his sins, simply to call upon him to believe and apply it to himself, and never question the truth of this heavenly message of grace — that this is the only right way to give him assurance of the forgiveness of sins and a like assurance of his salvation. After that he is to be exhorted — if he is still unbaptized — to receive Baptism for the remission of sins. For evidence that this is the only right way three examples from Holy Writ recounting instances of conversion were given us, namely, the conversion of the three thousand on the first festival of Pentecost by the preaching of the Apostle Peter, the conversion of the jailer at Philippi, and the marvelous conversion of the Apostle Paul, as told by himself in Acts.

We also learned that it is a false method to prescribe to an alarmed sinner all manner of rules for his conduct, telling him what he has to do, how earnestly and how long he must pray, and wrestle and struggle until he hears a mysterious voice whispering in his heart: "Your sins are forgiven; you are a child of God; you are converted," or until he feels that the grace of God has been poured out in his heart. That is the method adopted for conversion by all the Reformed sects and their adherents.

Would that this method of conversion were not found in the Lutheran Church! But, alas! such is the case. At first the *Pietists* tried to convert people by this method. In some points they were quite right. The Lutheran Church in those days had gone to sleep; it lay shrouded in spiritual death. The Pietists desired to come to the rescue. However, instead of going back to the purity of teaching of the Church of the Reformation and learning from that age how to quicken the spiritually dead, they adopted the method of the Reformed.

Let me illustrate this by the example of *Dr. John Philip Fresenius* (born in 1705, died in 1761). Since 1748 he was Senior of the Ministerium at Frankfort on the Main. He was a most excellent man, unquestionably a sincere Christian, a godly, pious author of many beautiful devotional writings, in which there is little to criticize. With great earnestness he wrote against the papists, the Jesuits, and the Herrnhuters. His attacks upon the Herrnhuters put him under a cloud in circles of believers at that time.

Even in his boyhood, Fresenius was a zealous Christian. In gatherings of the boys in his place he did mission-work among them and tried to convert them. He kept up this spirit until he entered

the university of Strassburg, where he studied with sturdy zeal and became a profound scholar. His father, who was in poor circumstances, did not like to see him enter the university, but John Philip went to Strassburg, relying on the help of God. Frequently he was in pitiful straits, living for quite a while on bread and water in a miserable lodging, until his professors heard of it and secured free lodging and board for him.

One of his most popular books is his *Book on Confession and Communion*, which was published in 1745. In a short time it went through eight editions. There were no "believers" in those days who did not own this book. In 1845 it was published in a new edition by Meyer, who not only failed to remove its errors, but even added some of his own.

My reason for illustrating by this very book how even Lutherans mingle the Law with the Gospel is because I had some very sad personal experience with this book. After graduating from college, I entered the university. I was no outspoken unbeliever, for my parents were believers. But I had left my parents' home already when I was eight years old, and all my associates were unbelievers; so were all my professors, with the exception of one, in whom there seemed to be a faint trace of faith. When I entered the university I did not know the Ten Commandments by heart and could not recite the list of the books in the Bible. My knowledge of the Bible was pitiful, and I had not an inkling of faith.

However, I had an older brother, who had entered the university before me. Not long before my arrival he had joined a society of converted people. Upon my arrival he introduced me to this circle of Christian students. I had no premonition of the fate I was approaching, but I had great respect for my brother, who invited me to come with him. At first I was attracted merely by the friendly and kind manner in which these students treated me. I was not used to such treatment, for at our college the intercourse of students had been a rather rough affair. I liked the manner of these students exceedingly well. At first, then, it was not the Word of God that attracted me. But I began to like the company of these Christian students so much that I gladly attended even their prayer-meetings — for they conducted such meetings.

Lo and behold! it was there that God began to work on my soul by means of His Word. In a short time I had really become a child of God, a believer, who trusted in His grace. Of course, I was not deeply grounded in Christian knowledge.

This state of affairs was continued for nearly half a year. Then an old candidate of theology, a genuine Pietist, entered our circle. He could not expect ever to obtain a pastorate in the state church, as at that time rationalism held sway everywhere. The other students thought we were crazy and shunned us as one does people who are afflicted with a contagious disease. That was the sad state of affairs in Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Now, this candidate who came to us said: "You imagine you are converted Christians, don't you? But you are not. You have not yet passed through any real penitential agony." I fought this view day and night, thinking at first that he meant to take us from under the sway of the Gospel and put us back under the Law. But he kept repeating his assertion until I finally began to ask myself whether I was really a Christian. At first I had felt so happy, believing in my Lord Jesus Christ; now there began for me a period of the severest spiritual afflictions.

I went to the candidate and asked him, "What must I do to be saved?" He prescribed a number of things that I was to do and gave me several books to read, among them Fresenius's *Book on Confession and Communion*. The farther I got in reading the book, the more uncertain I became whether I was a Christian. An inner voice kept saying to me: "The evidence that you have the requirements of a Christian is insufficient." To make matters worse, the aforementioned candidate was more pietistic than Fresenius himself. At that time, when opening any religious book treating of the order of grace and salvation, I would read only the chapter on repentance. When I would come to the chapters on the Gospel and Faith, I would close the book, saying: "That is not for me." An increasing darkness settled on my soul as I tasted less and less of the sweetness of the Gospel. God knows I did not mean to work a delusion on myself; I wanted to be saved. In those days I regarded those as the best books which spoke a stern language to sinners and left them nothing of the grace of God.

Finally I heard of a man who was reported to be a real spiritual physician. I wrote to him with the thought in my mind that, if he were to say something to me about the grace of God and the Gospel, I would throw his letter into the stove. However, his letter was so full of comfort that I could not resist its arguments. That is how I was brought out of my miserable condition into which I had been led chiefly by Fresenius.

What happy students are those who are immediately given the blessed and comforting doctrine of the Gospel! However, experience teaches that the very abundance of the pure doctrine of the divine Word is treated with growing contempt. This is deplorable indeed.

In his book Fresenius divides all communicants into nine classes. I did not fit into any one of them. The sainted Pastor Keyl, who certainly was a sincere Christian, assured me that he had no better luck. That is the result of dissecting a person's spiritual condition as Fresenius has done, who enumerates the types of communicants as follows: 1. Unworthy communicants; 2. such as are sincere seekers after grace, but have obtained no assurance; 3. such as are assured of their state of grace, especially spiritual infants, or puny beginners in Christianity; 4. young men, or such as have attained to some strength of faith; 5. fathers, or tried Christians; 6. such as are in great spiritual afflictions [though I was afflicted, I did not qualify for this class]; 7. such as rejoice in God; 8. such as are fallen from grace; 9. such as are in a state of distress.

Speaking of the first class, Fresenius writes (chap. 3, § 11): "If sinners of this type are to be enabled to obtain the forgiveness of sins and to receive the body and blood of Christ worthily, everything depends on their conversion. Accordingly, I shall here offer a faithful instruction regarding the points that have to be observed on their part in order that they may be thoroughly converted in a short time." (The remark "in a short time" sounded like Gospel to me, and I wished that it might be so in my case.) "I have tested the good quality of this instruction on many sinners in the past and found that it resulted in the certain salvation of every one who faithfully followed it. With great, heartfelt joy I observed that even such sinners as had been bound by Satan with exceptionally strong fetters were in a short time by his method brought into a state where they could be regarded as new creatures in Christ. It is a straight and simple method, without any great subtleties, and requiring no efforts on the part of the patient: all he has to do is to let God work in him; for it is He, after all, who must give us everything that we need.

"All depends on three rules which the sinner must observe. They are derived from the inmost nature of the divine order of salvation and are such that, if faithfully applied, the worst slaves of the devil are helped by them. If any one is not helped, he must blame his own unfaithfulness for it, and not the rules." (I resolved gladly to obey all rules.) "The first rule is: Pray for grace.

The second: Be watchful lest you lose grace. The third: Meditate upon the Word of God in a proper manner. Since a sinner cannot convert himself, he must pray for the grace of conversion. Since the grace which he has obtained in answer to his prayer can easily be lost, he must be watchful. Since the Word of God is the means of grace by which we are enlightened and regeneration, or the change of heart, is accomplished in adults, he must meditate upon it in a proper manner. This shows that these three rules have been derived from the inmost nature of the divine order of salvation.

"A brief explanation of these rules, one by one, will be of help towards learning how to observe them. As regards the first rule, the person desiring the grace of conversion must pray for it." (As if an unconverted person could seriously pray for conversion! He should have said: He must hear the Word of God. But that he has put into his third rule. His whole scheme makes conversion dependent on man's own effort to obtain grace.) "This prayer must be of a different quality than formerly, when he was still under the rule of sin. It must not be a frigid, unfamiliar, lifeless operation of the lips, but must be offered up with great, heartfelt earnestness. You enter your closet, as the Savior advises in Matt. 6, 6, or wherever you can speak to God in private, bow your knees, and with all your might cry for grace; not only for the grace that God may forgive your sins, but also for the grace that your heart may be changed and the love of sin destroyed in you. Since Christ has acquired for us even the first, or converting, grace, you base even your first prayer on His merit and call upon God to grant you converting grace for the reason that the Lord Jesus has paid so precious a ransom for you. This prayer you should offer, not once or twice, but you must continue offering it daily with sighs and strong crying, until you obtain grace, which assures you from your own experience that your heart has been truly changed."

Fresenius actually speaks of a person in whom sin is still dominant. His primary error (πρῶτον ψεῦδος) is the false distinction between being converted and quickened. As a matter of fact, any one who has been quickened, that is, raised from spiritual death, is converted. After his conversion he must, indeed, pray and wrestle. His faith at the beginning is like an infant that can easily die if it is not given nourishment. Praying and wrestling is not an exercise for unconverted, however, but for converted persons. — Fresenius speaks as if forgiveness of sin and renewal of the heart

were two different things, occurring at different times. The fact is that, when I have the forgiveness of my sins, my heart is changed, and the love of sin has been destroyed. — As regards the remarks of Fresenius about continuously crying to God until He bestows grace, has he ever heard that God is a hard-hearted being that must be softened by a person's prayers and by wrestling with Him? — He talks of a converted person as of one who is still to be converted. For basing one's prayer on the merits of Christ means believing in Christ. No matter how good the intention of Fresenius was, what he writes is awful. While speaking of the merits of Christ, he directs man to his own works, by which nothing will ever be achieved. His advice to cry to God "until you obtain grace" means, as the words that follow show, "until you have a feeling of grace." That sweet sensation which satisfies their hearts is what these people call grace. But grace is not something for which I must look in my heart. It is in the heart of God. Grace cannot be found in me, but is outside of me. If good old Fresenius had said all these things of a believing Christian, they would be correct. A Christian must do all those things; but before he is a Christian, he is spiritually dead; he has no spiritual vision, no spiritual hearing, no spiritual sensorium.

Fresenius proceeds: "Some of my readers may say: Granted that grace is obtained by praying, yet how can a sinner pray in the manner stated? Is not prayer itself an effect of divine grace, which we do not produce in ourselves while we are dead in sins? Answer: This kind of prayer is, indeed, an operation of grace which the sinner, dead in trespasses, cannot perform by his own power. But we know that prevenient, or quickening, grace quite often and earnestly knocks for admission into our heart for the purpose of rousing us from our sleep in sin. Whenever this happens, grace offers to the sinner something that he has not, namely, the strength to utter sighs and cry for help from the abyss of sin, as he should. The sinner himself can observe this if he is attentive. Often he is thrown into unrest because of his condition by the Word of God, by sickness, by the death of other people, by terrible dreams, by the thought of his own death, of the future Judgment, of hell and heaven, and like things. In that moment a desire for salvation and a mysterious sighing for grace begins to stir in him. Now, this desire and sighing is not a natural action of his, but it is from an energy which quickening grace has already produced in him. If he accepts this energy, it is no longer impossible for him to call

upon God, pray and cry as his condition requires, and while he is so doing, his strength to pray is continually increased by grace."

Imagine, giving this advice to a person "dead in sins"! As if such a person could do anything by an alien force! By these dangerous directions sincere hearts that have not passed through all these required experiences will be led to believe themselves quickened, but not yet converted. Thousands, yea, millions have been tormented with the thought that they are still unconverted. The sighing for grace of which Fresenius speaks is nothing else than the first spark of faith. It is never a power that is given a person for the purpose that he may achieve grace by using it. There is not a word of all these directions in Scripture. *After* we have become believers, we are told to wrestle with the devil, who wants to rob us of the grace we have received. It is indeed as I have stated: while a person is still unconverted, he is spiritually dead, hence without any strength. Even if strength were breathed into him, he could not use it as long as he is dead. Try and breathe strength into a statue and see whether it will move.

Modern theology is completely under the control of this error that man converts himself by spiritual powers that are conferred on him.

Fresenius continues: "Other readers may object that even Scripture declares that 'God heareth not sinners,' John 9, 31; hence it is useless for them to want to pray; for God testifies distinctly to the Israelites: 'When you spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear,' Is. 1, 15. I answer: These and similar passages of Scripture refer only to such sinners as pray for the averting of the vindictive judgments of God, for forgiveness of sin, or for nothing better than help in their temporal affairs, not, however, for a change of heart. While offering their prayers, they retain the settled purpose to continue in their ruling sins and discharge their prayer, not in the power of the Holy Spirit, but by their natural powers. In the nature of their case, then, they cannot be heard while in their perverse condition and cherishing their false purpose. David says: 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' The sinners, however, to whom we refer seek, not only forgiveness, but also a genuine change of heart, and their earnest endeavor is to be converted. Accordingly, also their prayer is an effect of divine grace. Now, God cannot despise His own work; it follows, then, that a prayer of this kind is truly heard, and the experience of many persons confirms this fact."

Fresenius is right in what he says about the faulty object of many prayers. But a prayer for a change of heart will not be offered except by a person in whom such a change has been begun. Only a believer is a person of this kind. While still an unbeliever, a person is dead in sins, takes serious matters lightly, and is unconcerned about whether he will go to heaven or hell if he should die the next night. He trusts in God's goodness in a carnal fashion. — However, a person who is concerned about his conversion already *is* converted. Unconverted persons have no such concern as true Christians have, who are always concerned about their soul's salvation. — The last remark of Fresenius comes natural to a theologian who makes a false distinction between being quickened and being converted and even ascribes enlightenment to a person still in spiritual blindness.

"The second rule," Fresenius continues, "is this: A person earnestly desiring to be converted must be on his guard to keep the grace which God has conferred on him. When God bestows the power to pray, He bestows at the same time the power to be watchful, and this power must be exercised with great care and earnestness. Such a person guards his own heart lest it be ruled by sinful thoughts, which hinder the operations of divine grace. He guards his eyes and ears lest new filth be carried into the heart by these avenues of approach and the inner work of the Holy Spirit be disturbed. He guards his tongue, lest by insincere and sinful words it grieve the Spirit of God, Eph. 4, 29. 30, and the heart be deceived, Jas. 1, 26. He guards his associations when mingling with other people, so as to keep away from anything evil, to quit once and forever the sinful friendship of the world, which is enmity against God, Jas. 4, 4, and whenever his professional duties lead him into the company of evil men, to make his heart firm against their evil doings, lest he become a partaker of other men's sins. He guards his entire conversation, lest he be contaminated again with intentional sins. He guards the operations of divine grace, so as to give them more room and to heed particularly the seasons of gracious visitation, when God rouses him afresh unto prayer, the meditation of His Word, the wrestling with sin, and the exercise of neighborly love, in order that at such times he may enter more thoroughly into grace by his sighings and supplications. This watchfulness is greatly needed in conversion, and the person failing in it and giving room to sin in his inner life or outward conduct cannot possibly be brought around to the right way. Many

persons make an earnest beginning of the task of their conversion: they beg and cry for grace, and God gives them as much grace as they are willing to accept. For a while they run well, Gal. 5, 7, but they are not in earnest about being watchful, they are not constant, and thus they lose the grace which they had obtained, and the enemy again takes possession of their heart.

"In this connection it is to be noted that watchfulness offers some difficulties in the beginning of a person's conversion; however, if he is but faithful, it becomes increasingly easy, until, by exercise, the persons obtains such a happy aptness for this work that he thinks he cannot but constantly be on his guard. But in view of the aforementioned difficulties it occasionally happens, at the beginning of conversion, that a person, by imprudence, suffers damage from the enemy either in his inner life or in his outward conduct. Whenever this happens, we are not to despair, but take fresh courage, flee to Jesus, and heartily pray for forgiveness of the imprudent act and for the grace of greater circumspection. Accordingly, praying and watching take turns about in a Christian and cooperate harmoniously."

What Fresenius says is well enough when said in reference to a beginner in the Christian faith. He describes the complete work of sanctification and expects all these things of an unconverted person. It is almost inconceivable that so learned and experienced a minister should have failed to see this point. Even the love of a person's fellow-man is assumed prior to his conversion. That is the dangerous feature of this "instruction." Any honest Christian reader will say to himself: "Since all these things are first to take place in me, I must pass for an unconverted person." It is awful to hear Fresenius speak of entering more thoroughly into grace, since grace is something in the heart of God. Grace is obtained either entire or not at all; it is never given piecemeal, as Luther puts it. A person is either a child of the devil or a child of God; either in the kingdom of darkness or in the kingdom of light; either in a state of grace with God or under His wrath. There is no middle ground.

What Fresenius says about the necessity of watchfulness for conversion involves an equivocal use of the term "grace," which is the cause of his error. He overlooks that Paul's charge against the Galatians (chap. 5, 7) was directed against people who were already converted. The dangers attending a person's carelessness which he depicts are true, but it is wrong to say that by the oppo-

site conduct a person is converted. It seems a mere afterthought in the scheme of Fresenius to remind his readers of the refuge that is open to them in Christ.

Now we take up Fresenius's third rule, *viz.*, that the Word of God must be meditated in the proper manner. We shall see that he is speaking exclusively of the power of the divine Word to change the heart of man. He is not speaking — and it seems he is entirely ignorant — of the collative power of the Word of God, by which gifts like justification are not only described, but at the same time conferred and communicated. The statement: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" produces faith in the statement and therewith communicates the blessing described. When listening to a preacher, we must imagine that God stands behind him. When he speaks words of comfort to me, I must say to myself that it is God who is speaking to me; when he pronounces forgiveness of sin to me, I must not merely think that, because these words are in the Bible, I am to derive some benefit from them, but I must say to myself: "By these words God Himself imparts forgiveness of sin to me." But this doctrine, alas! had vanished from the Lutheran Church for a long time.

Fresenius writes: "A person desiring to be converted must meditate upon the Word of God in a proper manner. This is done by reading as well as by hearing the Word. The Word is read in a proper manner by a person when he reads it for the purpose of being enlightened by it and being transformed into a new man by its power. Before, during, and after reading there must be a prayer for grace; not a great quantity, but little must be read; at every powerful passage there must be a halt, the heart must be lifted up to God, and the passage must be recited with a brief sigh and prayer that it may become effective in the reader. Beginners, in particular, are to be advised to read in this manner, first the four gospels, because they set before us the Lord Jesus with His grace and example. After that the same method may be followed for the reading of the remainder of the New Testament, the Psalms of David, and the other books of Holy Writ. Anything that the reader fails to understand he should reverently pass by, not stopping for doubtful musings, but holding on to what is clear and plain, in the certain hope that of the remainder God will gradually open up to him as much as he needs. — The Word of God is heard in the proper manner when it is heard from preachers who present it in its purity; when it is heard with the same purpose as

when it is read; when God is invoked for His gracious power and work before, during, and after hearing the Word; when it is gladly received and those passages, in particular, are noted which apply to that person's condition; finally, when it is kept and revolved and permitted to enter ever more deeply into the heart."

Fresenius does not say a word about this, that whoever believes the Scriptures receives what they say; for they do not merely tell about gifts of grace, but also offer and confer them. The Word is a distributing and appropriating instrument of grace. In Fresenius's scheme everything is made to depend on the person's conduct. — It is a questionable piece of advice to read little of Scripture. Halting occasionally at particular passages is proper, but a true Christian must also read the entire Bible rapidly in order to have a general knowledge of its contents. A quiet reflection upon these contents should go hand in hand with the reading. — Fresenius's advice would be excellent if he had not offered it to a person who is still to be converted. That is what makes his scheme wrong.

Fresenius concludes his explanation of the three rules for "such as are not yet converted, but would like to be" with these remarks: "Any one putting these three rules to practise with all possible fidelity will in a short time become a different person, and the grace of God will work in him so effectively that he will discover in himself with growing distinctness the marks of a new creature in Christ."

I ask you now: Where do we find an advice of this kind in the Bible? Whenever the apostles preached and their hearers asked them, "What must we do to be saved?" they returned no other answer than this: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." That is the only correct method to be adopted by a preacher who wants to lead men to faith and to an assurance of the forgiveness of their sins and of eternal life. When following this method, he must not omit urgently to recommend prayer, wrestling, and struggling, and the proper use of the Word of God at all times to those who have been led by this right way to the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins and of their state of grace. For from the opposition of orthodox Lutherans to this wrong method you must not infer that they are no friends of genuine, earnest Christianity, of earnest and incessant prayer, of earnest wrestling with sin and constant watchfulness. On the contrary, sincere Lutherans show as great zeal in these matters as in their refusal to lead men to Christ by a roundabout way.

SIXTEENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(January 30, 1885.)

No doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church is more offensive to the Reformed than the doctrine that the grace of God, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness in the sight of God, and eternal salvation, is obtained in no other way than by the believer's putting his confidence in the written Word, in Baptism, in the Lord's Supper, and in absolution. The Reformed, especially their theologians, declare that this way of getting into heaven is too mechanical, and on hearing the Lutheran teaching they denounce it as dead-letter worship, citing the statement of the Apostle Paul: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." 2 Cor. 3, 6. Again, they say: "What does baptizing with earthly water profit? The true baptism is baptizing with the Spirit and with fire." Again: "What is the benefit of eating and drinking the natural body and blood of Christ? The true food and drink by which the hunger and thirst of the soul is really stilled is the truth that came down from heaven." Finally, they say: "How can I be helped by a mortal, sinful man, who cannot look into my heart, saying to me: 'Thy sins are forgiven thee'? No; my sins are not forgiven except when God Himself speaks these words in my heart and makes me feel their force." That is the Reformed view.

Now, does this view agree with Scripture? By no means. In the Scriptural meaning of the term the "letter" is not something dead. The connection in 2 Cor. 3, 6 shows, in the first place, that the apostle refers, not to the Word of God as such, but to the Law. That is what kills. On the other hand, the "spirit" signifies the Gospel. That is what gives life. Consider, in addition, that when the apostle says: "The letter killeth," he cannot mean that the letter itself is dead; for something that is dead cannot kill.

According to the Holy Scriptures, Baptism is not a mere washing with earthly water, but the Spirit of God, yea, Jesus with His blood, connects with it for the purpose of cleansing me of my sins. Therefore Ananias says to Saul: "Be baptized and wash away thy sins," Acts 22, 16; and Jesus says to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God," John 3, 5. He names the water first and then the Spirit, for it is by this very baptizing with water that the Spirit is to be given me. In Gal. 3, 27 the apostle says clearly and distinctly: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"; and in Titus 3, 5—7:

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

According to the Holy Scriptures the Lord's Supper is not an earthly feast, but a heavenly feast on earth, in which not only bread and wine, or only the body and blood of Christ are given us, but together with these forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation is given and sealed to us. For, distributing the bread which He had blessed, Christ said: "This is My body, which is given *for you;* . . . this do in remembrance of Me." By the words "for you" He invited the disciples to ponder the fact that they were now receiving and eating that body by the bitter death of which on the cross the entire world would be redeemed. He meant to remind them that they ought to break forth with joy and gladness because the ransom that was to be paid for the sins of the whole world was, so to speak, put in their mouths. Offering the disciples the cup which He had blessed, Christ said: "This is the cup, the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you." Why did He add the words "shed for you"? He meant to say: "When receiving the blood of redemption in this Holy Supper, you receive at the same time what has been acquired on the cross by means of this sacrifice."

Finally, according to the Holy Scriptures the absolution pronounced by a poor, sinful preacher is not his absolution, but the absolution of Jesus Christ Himself; for the preacher absolves a person by the command of Christ, in the place of Christ, in the name of Christ. Christ said to His disciples: "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." John 20, 21. What is the import of these words? None other than this: "I am sent by My Father. When I speak to you, My words are the words of My Father. You must not consider the humble form in which you see Me. I come in the name of the Father, in the place of the Father, and the word of promise that proceeds from My mouth is the word of My Father. Now, in the same manner as My Father has sent Me I am sending you. You, too, are to speak in My name, in My place." Therefore He continues: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

Observe, then, the depreciative, contemptuous, and scorning ring in the words of the Reformed when they speak of the sacred means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments, and the grand,

majestic ring in the words of the Lord and the apostles when they speak of these matters. Now, who is right, Christ or the Reformed, the holy apostles or the ministers of the Reformed Church? I should feel ashamed to give the answer. You all know the answer.

The true reason for the Reformed view is this: They do not know how a person is to come into possession of the divine grace, the forgiveness of sin, righteousness in the sight of God, and eternal salvation. Spurning the way which God has appointed, they are pointing another way, in accordance with new devices which they have invented. We gained this conviction in our last evening lecture. May the Lord grant us His Holy Spirit to the end that to-night we may be strengthened and confirmed in our conviction and be blessed with a cheerful faith.

The ninth thesis which we are studying is one of the most important in the entire series. For the confounding of Law and Gospel that is common among the sects consists in nothing else than this, that they instruct alarmed sinners by prayer and inward wrestling to fight their way into a state of grace until they feel grace indwelling in them, instead of pointing them to the Word and the Sacraments. Theirs looks like a very godly and Christian procedure, and an inexperienced person can easily be deceived by it. But God be praised! we have God's Word, which does not deceive us; a Word on which we can rely and by which we can abide in the present darkness, which it lights up for us. When Death summons us hence, we can, though void of any feeling, follow him confidently and say: "I shall gladly go with you. I praise God for my escape from this terrible prison. I entertain no doubt that I shall stand before the throne of a gracious God. Why? Not because I feel that way; not because I have performed good works; not because I have amended my mode of living. All these things would be sinking sand; for it is quite possible that in the hour of death feelings of gladness will forsake me. Being accustomed to rely on the Word, I have the trusty staff which I need for support at my passage through the dark valley of death."

May our heavenly Father fit you out with His Word when entering the ministry lest your efforts turn out a beating of the air! May you be ever conscious of administering to your hearers the Word of the everlasting, living God, to which the devils in hell shall not say, Nay! May your slogan be: "When the Lord speaks, let all keep silence; for He is Lord over all, and all must be in subjection to Him."

To the best of my ability I have so far expounded to you this

doctrine as I find it in the Holy Scriptures. In order that you may see that I am not presenting my private opinion, but the doctrine of our dear Lutheran Church, let us hear what the Confessions of our Church say about this matter. But let us first hear a testimony of Zwingli in behalf of the Reformed teaching. Apparently Zwingli has not wielded as great an influence as Calvin, but he laid the foundation of the Reformed Church before God snatched him out of the world of the living by a sudden death. The clumsy work of Zwingli has been smoothed down by Calvin, who by the *finesse* of his workmanship gained the English and the French over to his side, while he accomplished little among the German people. The doctrine of Zwingli is the source from which all false teachings of the Reformed churches have sprung. What does he say regarding the relation of the means of grace to faith?

Most of you know that in 1530 the Zwinglians wanted to join in the Augsburg Confession, but that the Lutherans denied them fellowship. Accordingly, Zwingli wrote a so-called Augsburg Confession of his own and sent it to the emperor. The most appalling feature of this confession is this: six months previous to this Zwingli had endorsed the very opposite doctrine. For in the late fall of 1529, at the Marburg Colloquy, he had, among other things, signed this statement: "In the eighth place, the theologians have agreed that the Holy Spirit . . . gives faith to no one except through previous preaching and by and with the Word creates and works faith as, where, and in whom He pleases. In the ninth place, that Holy Baptism is a Sacrament, by which man is regenerated."

The pure, plain Lutheran doctrine, then, had been laid before the Zwinglians and before Zwingli himself by Luther, and they had accepted it because they desired a union with the Wittenberg theologians. With tears in his eyes Zwingli stood before Luther, offering his hand and asking for brotherly fellowship. Going as far as he thought he could, he declared: "By the spoken Word of God faith is produced in men; by Baptism a person is regenerated." Half a year later he denied all this. For in his confession he writes: "In the seventh place, I believe and know that all Sacraments, far from conferring grace, do not even offer or present it." Remember, at Marburg Zwingli had subscribed to the opposite teaching and pledged his hand to the same as being his confession.

Zwingli proceeds: "Possibly I may appear to you, most puissant Emperor, as speaking with unwarranted freedom. But with me this matter is settled. For grace is wrought and bestowed by the

Holy Spirit, and hence this gift must be attributed to the Holy Spirit. (I am using the term *grace* in the meaning which it has in Latin and understand it to mean forgiveness, kindness, and benefaction, without any merit and not as a recompense for same.)" He means to say: "That is the reason why preaching, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper are useless; they are mere symbols." "The Spirit, however," says Zwingli, "requires no conveyance, or vehicle; for He is Himself the conveying force by which everything is transferred; He does not need to be transferred. We read nowhere in the Holy Scriptures a teaching of this kind, that external objects, such as the Sacraments, are a sure means of bringing the Spirit to men; on the contrary, whenever external objects have come along with the Spirit, it was in every instance the Spirit, not the external objects, that did the conveying. For instance, when a mighty wind began to blow, the languages came at the same time, by the power of the wind; the wind was not supported by the power of the languages. Likewise, a wind brought quails, another carried away grasshoppers; but never have quails and grasshoppers been so light and nimble as to bring wind. Likewise, when a wind so strong as to lift up mountains went by Elijah, the Lord was not in the wind. To be brief, 'the Spirit [wind] bloweth where it listeth,' that is, it blows in a manner agreeable to its nature, 'and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. [Zwingli: *"wo er stille wird,"* where it subsides.] So is every one that is born of the Spirit,' that is, who is enlightened and drawn in an invisible and intangible manner. Truth has spoken these words; hence the grace of the Spirit is not conveyed by this immersing or yonder drinking or by unction. For if this were so, we *should* know how, where, whither, and upon what the Spirit comes. For if the presence and efficacy of grace is attached to the Sacraments, they will operate wherever they are applied; and wherever they are not applied, all will be decrepit and miserable. Theologians at this point must not prate about the substance, or person, receiving grace, namely, that the grace of Baptism or the Lord's Supper is given to such as are in a proper condition and fit to receive it, as they say. For any one receiving grace by means of the Sacraments, as they claim, either makes himself fit, or is prepared by the Spirit, for its reception. If we do it ourselves, we must have some natural ability, and *prevenient grace* is naught. But if a person is prepared for the reception of grace by the Spirit, I ask whether this occurs in connection with the Sacrament or outside of it. If it occurs by means of the Sacrament, a person is prepared

for the Sacrament by the Sacrament, and this process will have to be extended *ad infinitum*, a Sacrament being always required for preparation for a Sacrament. But if he is prepared without a Sacrament for the reception of sacramental grace, surely the Spirit with His grace is present *prior to* the Sacrament; *hence there is grace conveyed and present before the Sacrament comes.* This leads to the conclusion (which I gladly admit and concede in the sacramentarian controversy) that the Sacraments are offered as *public evidence of that grace* which exists *previously* in every individual."

In what vulgar terms does Zwingli here speak of these sacred matters! When the Holy Spirit wants to approach man, He does not need the Word of God, the Gospel, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, for a conveyance; He can come without them! It must be a queer Bible which Zwingli read. — In speaking of external objects that are to convey the Spirit, Zwingli inserts the word "surely." That is ambiguous. The means of grace *actually* convey grace, but not in such a manner as to coerce man to receive them. To the person receiving Baptism, God says: "I will be thy God, and thou shalt be in grace and favor with Me." If the person refuses to receive this offer, he obtains no grace; but the reason for that is not because there is no grace for him to receive, but because he despises it. The whole Bible is full of testimonies to the fact that the Word and the Sacraments actually convey the Holy Spirit. For instance, Acts 10, 44: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the Word." Here the coming of the Holy Spirit is attributed to the Word. As regards Baptism, you have heard that streams of the Holy Spirit are poured out with Baptism. — "This immersing," "yonder drinking," is Zwingli's way of referring to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He also mentions extreme unction because he is addressing the Roman Catholic emperor. Among Lutherans this temporary ceremony, which was in use in the time of the apostles, has never been regarded as a Sacrament. — Remember, then, according to Zwingli's teaching Baptism confers no gift because the Holy Spirit requires no vehicle for His conveyance.

"The Church, then," Zwingli continues, "receives by Baptism those who have been first received by grace. *Accordingly, Baptism confers no grace*, but only testifies to the Church that the person receiving it has already obtained grace. . . . In the tenth place, I believe that the office of prophesying, or preaching, is sacred because it is highly necessary above all other offices. For, to speak with canonical correctness, we observe that among all nations ex-

ternal preaching by the apostles and evangelists or bishops has preceded faith" [Zwingli mentions this because it is an undeniable fact, and he calculates that his adversaries will now be unable to charge him with concealing this fact], "and yet we attribute man's faith to the Spirit alone. For, alas! we behold a great many *who are hearing the external preaching of the Gospel* and yet do not believe *because the Spirit is lacking.*"

There you behold the fanatic. From this teaching fanaticism is bound to crop out. It certainly has cropped out. We have the best evidence of it here in America, where the appeal to the Spirit is heard everywhere.

In conclusion, Zwingli says, in words that give us a glimpse of his doctrine of absolute predestination: "If, notwithstanding this, the prophets, or preachers of the Word, are sent to any place, that is an indication of the grace of God, who wants to reveal the knowledge of Himself to the elect." He means to say: "When the Word is preached and there are still so many people unconverted, the reason is not that the Word has not exerted its efficacy, but because there is no efficacy in the Word. The Spirit must produce the effect. God permits preaching only because He wants to convert the elect. Accordingly, He applies His Spirit to some and takes Him away from others."

That plainly shows what the Reformed Church teaches regarding the relation of the means of grace to grace, righteousness, and the salvation of sinners.

Now listen to a few testimonies from our own confessions. In the *Smalcald Articles,* Part III, Art. VIII, § 10 (Mueller, p. 322; *Trigl. Conc.,* p. 497), we read: "Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that *God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments.*" The Spirit comes to men by means of the Word. A person may imagine that he is full of the Spirit to the bursting point, but it is his own spirit of fanaticism. The true Spirit is obtained only through the Word of God. In every passage of the Holy Scriptures which recounts the conversion of people we see that God wants to deal with men only through the Word and Sacraments.

The *Apology,* Art. IV, § 68 (Mueller, p. 92; *Trigl. Conc.,* p. 139): "But God cannot be treated with, *God cannot be apprehended, except through the Word. Accordingly, justification occurs through the Word, just as Paul says, Rom. 1, 16: 'The*

Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Likewise, 10, 17: 'Faith cometh by hearing.' And proof can be derived even from this that faith justifies, because, if justification occurs only through the Word and the Word is apprehended only by faith, it follows that *faith justifies.*" This important statement declares that all who do not esteem the means of grace do not believe from the heart that man is saved solely by grace. For what does their objection to the means of grace amount to? They argue: "Is a person really to obtain forgiveness of sins by the mere application of the letter, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, absolution? That would be too easy." But if we are to be saved by pure grace, why should our salvation be such a difficult task — provided it is to be really grace that is to save us? Just because we are to be saved by grace, God must have arranged matters so that we need nothing but a means by which God offers us forgiveness of sins, grace, and salvation. When God says to the sinner, "Only believe," He practically says: "Accept what I give you; have confidence in Me. What I tell you is the truth. Only come, lay hold of the gift and take it." When I hear the Gospel preached to me, I am to believe that it is God who brings me these glad tidings through the preacher who is proclaiming them to me. God at the same time says to me: "Why are you toiling to accumulate meritorious works? Christ has acquired all that you need. Only believe, and all is yours. I am not telling you a lie." That is what God says.

Now, anything that is predicated of the Word of God is predicated, as a matter of course, also of the Sacraments; for they are also means of grace. They are the visible Word. The Word of God, the Gospel, is only audible, but the Sacraments are also visible, for they are acts attached to objects of sense. Therefore it is a very horrible error, fostered in our time particularly by so-called modern, or up-to-date, believers, *viz.*, that the Word has an efficacy peculiarly its own, that Baptism is a special remedy for other ills, and the Lord's Supper for still others. But these are vain human speculations, of which there is not a word to be found in the Scriptures. Let us hear our confessions on this matter.

In the *Apology,* Art. XIII, § 5 (Mueller, p. 196; *Trigl. Conc.,* p. 309), we read: "But just as the Word enters the ear to strike our heart, so the rite [Sacrament] itself strikes the eye in order to move the heart. *The effect of the Word and of the rite is the same,* as it has been well said by Augustine that a *Sacrament* is a *visible Word,* because the rite is received by the eyes, and is, as it

were, a picture of the Word, signifying the same things as the Word. *Therefore the effect of both is the same.*"

This is an important point. To a hearing person I can preach the Gospel by words. In the case of a deaf person, whom I cannot teach by that method, I may take a picture representing the birth of Christ with the angels coming out of heaven or one that represents the cricifixion. By way of pantomime I can explain the pictures and instruct the deaf without speaking a word to him. That is what God does by means of the Sacraments, which show us in a picture, so to speak, what God proclaims audibly in the Word. "The Sacraments are the visible Word," that is an excellent axiomatic utterance of Augustine. A person, therefore, who speaks of the Sacraments in terms of depreciation and contempt says the same things against the Word and does not consider the terrible guilt that he assumes. He ridicules God, turning Him into a wretched master of ceremonies, who has prescribed all sorts of pantomimes for us merely for the purpose of exercising our faith. No; God is not occupied with such paltry things, now that the era of types and figures is past. The body itself and the essence of God's gifts have arrived, now that the time of the Old Testament is past.

In his *Brief Commentary on Isaiah,* on chap. 20, 2, *Luther* writes (St. L. Ed. VI, 285): "In the same manner as the Holy Spirit operates by means of the Word He operates also through the signs, which are, so to speak, nothing else than the acted Word, inasmuch as the same things are expressed by an act as by the words sounding in men's ears. And since the Word never returns void, the signs cannot be without result either. Thus Baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs by which our faith is raised up and strengthened." This citation shows that our Church does not teach that the mere hearing of the Word or immersing a person in water and drawing him out again leads to faith and the obtaining of grace. If that were so, we would be saved by works, would we not? No; the crucial point while we are engaged in pious meditation of the Word is that we say to ourselves: "That is the voice of God speaking to me." Being baptized without faith is useless, even if the act were repeated ten times a day. Communing without faith would not profit us if we received the Sacrament daily. Nay, these acts, thus performed, would rather increase our blindness and the darkness that enshrouds us, our hardness of heart and spiritual obduration, and, in the end, our damnation. The doctrine of our Church, then, is this: The Word and the Sacraments operate in

such a manner as to raise us up in faith and prompt us to lay hold of the blessings offered us.

In a general way *Luther* treats this subject in commenting on Deut. 4, 28. He writes (St. L. Ed. III, 1691 ff.): "See whether our new schismatics and fanatics are not leading the people to trust in their own works. Take the Anabaptists: what are they doing, and what do they teach? They declare that Baptism is worthless; they remove from Baptism the element of grace, so that there is no grace and mercy of God, no forgiveness of sin, in it, and baptism becomes an *evidence* of my own godliness, *prior to* my baptism, or a mark that I now *possess* godliness. They separate grace from Baptism and leave us a mere external sign, in which there is *not a grain of mercy;* all grace has been cut away. Now, if the grace of Christ has been removed from Baptism, there remains nothing but a mere work. Likewise, in the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper* the fanatics remove the promise offered us in this Sacrament; they tell us that what we eat and drink is nothing but bread and wine. Here, too, the proffered grace is cut away and renounced. For they teach us that the only good work that we do by communing is professing Christ; as to the rest, we merely eat and drink bread and wine in the Supper, and there is no grace in it for us.

"That is the result of falling away from the First Commandment: a person promptly sets up an idol in the form of some meritorious work, in which he trusts. Therefore Moses says: My dear children, have a care to abide with God and follow Him. Otherwise you cannot avoid idolatry; you will fall into that sin, no matter how much you struggle against it. For the devil at all times assaults the grace of God; *no heresy can bear the teaching of divine grace.* The fanatics of our day all urge the First Commandment, saying: We, too, proclaim grace and mercy through Christ; we do not reject the doctrine of the First Commandment. They charge that I, Luther, am telling lies about them. However, put them to the test: *True, they confess Christ who was crucified and died for us and thus saved us; but they renounce the means by which we obtain Him; they demolish the way, the bridge, and path leading to Christ.*

"Also the Jews believe that there is a God, but they spurn the way that leads to God, namely, Christ, the Man Christ Jesus. The Turks confess God, but they renounce the means, or bridge, by which we come to God, namely, the grace of God. They refuse Christ and any sacraments by which a person obtains grace. They

act just like people to whom a preacher says, 'Here I have a treasure,' but who does not put the treasure plainly before them or give them the key to unlock it. Of what benefit would the treasure be to them? *They lock up the treasure from us,* which they ought to lay plainly before us, and lead us upon a monkey's tail. *They deny me access to the treasure and refuse to hand it over to me that I may have and use it.*

"Granted, then, that the fanatics talk a great deal about God, forgiveness of sins, the grace of God, and the death of Christ, still, when the question is raised how to come to Christ and obtain grace, how to effect a union with Him, they tell me that the Spirit alone must do this. They make me step on a monkey's tail by saying that the external and oral proclamation of the Word, Baptism, and the Sacrament [the Lord's Supper] are worthless. And yet they preach grace. That amounts to proclaiming the existence of a treasure in fine terms, but taking away the key and bridge that would put me in possession of the treasure. Now, God has ordained that this treasure is to be offered and conveyed to men by means of Baptism, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the external Word. These are the means and instruments by which to obtain the grace of God. They deny this truth.

"I state these matters because the devil is so cunning that he *professes the words* of this truth, but renounces the *means* by which we obtain what the words declare. The fanatics do not renounce the treasure, but the *use* and *benefit* of it. They deprive us of the method, of the ways and means for getting at the treasure, so that we could enjoy it. They shut us out from the grace which we would very much like to have. They tell us that we must have the *Spirit;* but they will not concede to me the means by which I may *have* the Spirit. How can I receive the Spirit and believe when the Word of God is not preached and the Sacraments are not administered to me? I must have the means; for 'faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God,' Rom. 10, 17.

"To sum up, there can be no schismatic but must run counter to the First Commandment and stumble at Christ Jesus. All heretics meet in a grand *ensemble* at this article. Let us, then, abide by this article: 'Thou shalt have no other gods,' and let us diligently bear in mind its object and scope. For if we put it out of our sight, we are opening the doors wide to all schismatic spirits. *God never proposed to set up His worship in this world without external means.*"

This citation is taken from the sermon which Luther preached at the Marburg Colloquy. He speaks out against the fanatics, the Zwinglians, the Anabaptists. For although Zwingli admitted the correctness of Luther's teaching, we have seen that half a year later he revoked his admission in a solemn address to the emperor. He desired that the emperor would have his confession read at an open session of the Diet of Augsburg. But this was not done, and not until after Zwingli's death was this confession published by his son-in-law, who thought he must by this document rear a monument to his father-in-law. It is, verily, a sorry monument.

This sermon of Luther, then, was preached in 1529. Do not make a mistake about the chronology of the sermon. Did not Zwingli in 1529 unite with Luther in a confession? Did not Luther, then, do Zwingli a grievous wrong by preaching as he did? By no means; at the time when the sermon was preached Zwingli had not yet made this confession. That explains Luther's language.

Let us examine some of the points Luther makes. While the fanatics do not issue orders like these: "You must give such or such an amount to the poor, or you must forgive your enemy; by doing these things you will merit heaven," still, when they declare that it is asking too little of men to demand that they accept the glad tidings of the Gospel, it is proper to declare them non-Christians. For he alone is a Christian who believes that he is saved by grace. When a person has already become a Christian, I may tell him that his toil and strife will now commence because he has faith. I must tell him this, not to make him believe that he is to get to heaven because of his labor and worry; for before a person can engage in the Christian's toil and strife, he must have entered heaven, that is, started his heavenly conversation, here on earth.

The fanatical Anabaptists caused a schism on account of Baptism, although they asserted that Baptism is useless; they said it was a mere act of outward obedience which — imagine their impudence! — a person must render in order to fulfil all righteousness. That is the Anabaptist way of coming to an agreement with the teaching of Christ. When they receive baptism, that is to be viewed as an act of kindness on their part: they are doing God a service by it. That is still their teaching, as I know from my personal experience and through my reading.

This is their terrible doctrine: Grace must have been obtained first; then Baptism is added as a sign that the person already pos-

sesses grace. Baptism, in their view, is nothing else than a work that man performs.

Likewise they declare participation in the Holy Supper a good work because by that act the communicant confesses Christ. However, he must come to Communion possessing grace.

Luther's remark about the enmity of all heretics against the grace of God is an important axiomatic statement. Every heresy that has sprung up was caused by the heretic's inability to believe that man becomes righteous in the sight of God, and is saved, by grace alone. That is the real rock of offense against which all heretics, all false teachers, dash their head. But there is no escape from this dilemma: either believe this truth or see what will become of you. For since the great God came down from heaven, I may not treat this matter lightly.

But must I not add something to make God's work complete? No; you are to fall prostrate before God as a poor sinner, like the leper in the Gospel, and praise and magnify the abounding grace of God. When you do this, you will perceive the fatuity of the fanatics' insistence on having the Spirit. You will then receive the Spirit of God and become ardent in your love of God. You will perceive that this is not a mechanical way of getting into heaven, but the most spiritual way that can be pointed out. This Spirit is no delusion. Spirit and life spring from the Word of God.

Luther touches the main point of the controversy when he speaks of the bridge to Christ that has been demolished by the Anabaptists and Sacramentarians. It is a useless tale when I am told about a precious treasure which I am to fetch and have for my getting if the way to the treasure is not shown me and the means for lifting it. Such talk will seem sheer twaddle. But that is exactly the fanatics' way of talking about the great treasure that lies concealed in the Christian religion. When they are asked about the way by which to get to it, they cannot tell it. It is a true sentiment that is expressed in one of the Lutheran hymns: —

> Thy Baptism, Supper, and Thy Word
> My consolation are, O Lord,
> For they contain my treasure.

Whoever does not go to these places to lift the treasure will not fetch any gold. What he gets may look like gold, but it is mere tinsel. Would that I could press this truth deeply into your hearts and that the sound of my words would not simply sweep past your ears, but bring energy and life to you! Oh, what witnesses you would become by refusing to deny the grace of God in Christ as the fanatics do!

As to the monkey's tail to which Luther refers, what he means to say is this: If a person were seeking for a firm footing while climbing a tree and, stepping forth, would land on the tail of a monkey sitting on a higher limb, he would see on what precarious "footing" he had stepped.

I confess that what Luther says about the treasure of divine grace lying stored up for us in the Word and in the Sacraments is something that caused me considerable worry during my student days. I thought that way too easy and therefore wrong, until I was thrown into great anguish and distress and found out that it is the right way. Since then I have, by the grace of God, stuck to this way. I say by the grace of God, for no one arrives at this knowledge or adheres to it by his own strength. We are all by nature much more inclined to choose the wrong than the right way. In the end, people, even in sectarian circles, if they are children of God, turn to the right way, at least in the hour of death. They may not decide to become Lutherans, but that is not of such moment; for a person may bear the name of Lutheran and yet go to the devil. Without fully realizing what they are doing, these people cast aside everything in which they had placed their confidence and rely only on the mercy of God. The reason why even in the Papacy many are saved is because in the end they cast everthing else overboard and cling only to the mercy of God. The goodness and grace of God are marvelous. A person may have despised the grace of God for fifty years and may be burdened with millions of sins, abominable sins; finally he collapses and cries: "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" and God receives him. But this truth must not be wantonly abused. A person may not conclude that he can continue sinning at his ease and in his last hour simply repeat the cry of the penitent publican. A calculation of this kind leads to hardening, and the outcome may be that the person will be suddenly snatched out of life before he can formulate a single godly thought and presently find himself in eternity standing before the judgment-seat of God.

Remember Luther's summing up of the case against the fanatics: The Spirit is not obtained except by simple trust in God's Word. Even when void of any feeling, the person who declares: "God has said so, therefore I shall believe it," will find that the Holy Spirit has entered his heart, filling it with His peace and joy.

Here we shall halt to-night. The discussion of this matter is of such importance that I shall take it up once more next week. I owe you a thorough discussion, for I am conscious of my great

responsibility towards you. I shall soon stand before the throne of God to give an account of this great number of dear souls to whose care thousands will some day be entrusted. God will demand of me a statement whether I have fully discharged my office. Therefore I must speak to you on this subject whether you like it or not. However, I have no doubt that you like it, especially those of you who from their childhood have had the precious Word of God. I trust that even you have passed through some spiritual experiences that have taught you the true comfort in every affliction and its only source, the Word of God, which, whenever you feel worried, assures you of your salvation.

SEVENTEENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(February 6, 1885.)

My Dear Friends: —

In 1529, Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, instituted a colloquy at Marburg between Luther and his followers and fellow combatants in the Reformation, on the one hand, and Zwingli and some of his followers, on the other. At first it seemed that the desired object of brotherly and ecclesiastical union could really be attained; for the Swiss made one concession after the other. But the movement was brought to a halt at the discussion of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. For the sake of peace the Swiss, indeed, offered to speak like Luther concerning the substantial presence of the true body and the true blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, only they would understand by that a *spiritual* presence. Spite of this the Swiss desired with great earnestness — Zwingli even with tears in his eyes — that brotherly and ecclesiastical fellowship be not refused them on account of this single difference.

What did Luther do on this occasion? He had soon noticed that the Swiss were not acting quite honestly. That his suspicion was not without foundation was revealed, you know, six months later, when Zwingli overthrew the entire agreement and denied all concessions which he had made at Marburg. Accordingly, Luther said to Zwingli: "Yours is a different spirit from ours." This winged word, this memorable, world-renowned dictum of Luther, struck the heart of Zwingli and his followers with the force of lightning. Zwingli speaks of the effect in a letter to his friend Dr. Propst, pastor at Bremen. He relates that whenever he repeated those words of Luther to himself, — and he did that

often, — he felt their consuming force. Why? He and his friends knew they were beaten; they felt that they stood revealed and had to uncover their insincere aim of setting up a mere external union.

What was Luther's meaning when he uttered those words: "Yours is a different spirit from ours"? Unquestionably this: "If you poor mortals were merely caught in an error because of your human weakness, we could, yea, we would have to, regard you as weak, erring brethren, but still as our brethren, because you would surely be soon rid of this single error of yours. But that is not the case; the difference between you and us is this, that yours is a different spirit."

What spirit did Luther find lacking in the Swiss? Unquestionably the spirit to which the Lord refers when He says, Matt. 18, 3: "Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Indeed, my friends, that is the spirit which Zwingli and his followers lacked and which those who follow in his footsteps in our day are still lacking. It is the spirit of childlike simplicity which takes the Father in heaven by His words. The spirit of the Zwinglian, Calvinist, and unionistic churches is nothing else than the rationalistic spirit, the spirit of doubt and uncertainty which, like unenlightened, unregenerate Nicodemus, queries before every mystery of the Holy Scriptures: "How can these things be?" John 3, 9. That passes my comprehension; that is contrary to my reason. When people of this character make concessions, they give you no assurance of reliability. This is plainly shown by their entering into union with people who teach doctrines contrary to their own. Moreover, as a rule, they betray that they are ashamed of their religion themselves and are unwilling to admit with their mouths as much as they are forced to admit in their hearts.

On the other hand, the spirit of Luther and of the entire genuine Lutheran Church is the spirit of childlike simplicity, the spirit of faith, the spirit that submits to the Word of God and takes human reason captive under the wisdom from on high. It is the spirit that finds expression in one of our glorious hymns, in these words: —

> **What Thou hast spoken true must be;**
> **Thou art almighty, and with Thee**
> **Impossible is nothing.**

Let no one who is unable to confess these words with the pious poet call himself a Lutheran; he belongs to the fanatical sects.

The characteristic mark of our Church is unquestioned submission to the divine Word, while our sectarian teachers are continually tossed about like the waves of the sea and betray the fact that they are not founded upon the rock of the Word of God. Now, every Church which lacks this spirit of childlike simplicity, even when professing the truth with the mouth, is not to be trusted. That is indeed a terrible charge, but from what I have stated in my previous remarks you know that it is not without foundation. Let me offer you a few additional proofs.

The Protestant churches, so called, which are outside of the pale of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, know nothing of the true way to forgiveness of sin by means of the Word and, in general, through the means of grace. This is evident, in particular, from their rejection of absolution as pronounced by the minister from the pulpit, or in general and private confession. These so-called Protestant churches assert that of all Protestant churches the Lutheran has really been reformed least; for, they say, it still retains much of the leaven of the Romish Church. For proof they cite the gown worn by our ministers when officiating, the wafers used by us instead of ordinary bread at Communion, the crucifix and the lights on our altars, the liturgical chanting of our ministers at the altar, signing persons with the holy cross, and bowing the head at the mention of the name of Jesus. All these matters are innocent ceremonies, on which our Church does not condition man's salvation here or hereafter, but which it will not permit to be pronounced sin. For no creature has the right to declare something a sin which God has not declared such. Anything that God has neither commanded nor forbidden is a matter of liberty. But the aforementioned churches go a step farther when they assert that the worst papistic leaven and the most abominable remnant of the Papacy in the Lutheran Church is absolution.

Their charge is grounded, first, in their ignorance of what we really teach concerning absolution. They have made an absolute caricature of our doctrine. They are not conscientious enough to investigate the meaning we connect with absolution. They are not so honest to inquire of us what we mean by absolution, but behind our backs they slander us, calling us papists, who would lead our poor people back to Rome. As a rule, these people imagine we teach that by the rite of ordination a minister becomes endowed with a certain mysterious power, which enables him to forgive sin. They imagine we teach that absolution is a privilege of the minister, so that, while sins are forgiven when an ordained minister

pronounces these words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee," these words would be without effect when pronounced by a layman.

Now, everybody knows that such is not our doctrine, but that it is the doctrine of the papists. They could get the information even from our Small Catechism that our doctrine is entirely different; for it states, in the Fifth Chief Part, concerning the Office of the Keys, that the power to forgive sins has been given to the *Church* on earth; for it says: "The Office of the Keys is the *peculiar church power* which Christ has given to His *Church* on earth, to forgive the sins of penitent sinners unto them and to retain the sins of the impenitent so long as they do not repent." Mark this phrase: "peculiar church power"! It means that the power has been given, not to the preachers, but to the Church. The preachers are not the Church, but only servants [ministers] of the Church. If they are Christians, they belong to the Church, but not if they are not Christians. In that case they are mere hewers of wood and drawers of water for the sanctuary like the Gibeonites in the Old Testament. If they are Christians, they are joint owners with others of the Office of the Keys; however, the keys do not belong to the preachers exclusively, but to the Church, to every individual member of the Church. The humblest day-laborer possesses them just as well as the most highly esteemed general superintendent. Our Church has plainly stated this fact, among other things, in a remarkable story told by Augustine. We read in the *Smalcald Articles* (Mueller, p. 341; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 523): "In a case of necessity even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another, as Augustine narrates the story of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the catechumen, who after baptism then absolved the baptizer."

Once upon a time two persons were traveling in a ship, one of them a converted Christian, the other a pagan. They formed an acquaintance. The Christian proclaimed the Gospel to his new acquaintance, and by the operation of the Holy Spirit the pagan became a believing Christian. Suddenly a fearful tempest arose. Death was staring the passengers in the face, as everybody despaired of being saved. The former pagan's one supreme wish was that he might receive Holy Baptism before going down into the water, while the Christian was craving for absolution. In this predicament the Christian proposed to the pagan a plan by which both their wishes could be fulfilled: he would baptize the pagan, and the pagan, having been made a Christian, would then absolve the Christian. The plan was carried out, and when they had safely

weathered the storm by the protecting providence of God and reached land, the bishop to whom their doings on board ship were reported did not pronounce them invalid, but both the baptism and the absolution were acknowledged to be valid.

On what doctrinal basis does the Lutheran practise of absolution rest? On the following facts: —

1. Christ, the Son of God, took upon Himself by imputation all sins of every sinner, counting them as His own. Accordingly, John the Baptist, pointing to Christ, says: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1, 29.

2. By His life in abject poverty, by His suffering, crucifixion, and death, Christ has wiped out the record of the world's sin and procured remission of all sins. No man living, from Adam to the last human being that will be born, is excepted from this plan. For St. Paul writes, 2 Cor. 5, 21: "God hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Even Isaiah, chap. 53, 5: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." And even in an Old Testament prophecy still earlier than that of Isaiah we hear the Messiah wail: "I restored that which I took not away." Ps. 69, 4.

3. By raising His Son Jesus Christ from the dead, God the Father confirmed, and put the stamp of approval on, the work of reconciliation and redemption which Christ finished on the cross. For by the resurrection of Christ He has, in the presence of heaven and earth, angels and men, declared: "As My Son has cried on the cross, 'It is finished,' so do I announce, It is finished indeed! Ye sinners are redeemed. Forgiveness of sins is prepared for everybody; it is ready; it must not first be acquired by you."

4. By His command to preach the Gospel to every creature, Christ commanded at the same time to preach forgiveness of sins to all men, hence to bring to them the glad tidings: "All that is necessary for your salvation has been accomplished. When asking, What must we do to be saved? do but remember that all has been done. There is nothing more to do. You are only to believe all that has been done for you, and you will be relieved."

5. Christ did not only issue a general command to His apostles and their successors in office to preach the Gospel, hence the forgiveness of sin, but to minister to each individual who desires it this comfort: "You are reconciled to God." For if forgiveness of sins

has been procured for all, it has been procured for each individual. If I may offer it to all, I may offer it to each individual. Not only *may* I do this, I am *ordered* to do it. If I fail to do it, I am a servant of Moses and not a servant of Christ.

6. Now that forgiveness of sin has been procured, as stated, not only has a minister a special commission to proclaim it, but every Christian, male or female, adult or child, is commissioned to do this. Even a child's absolution is just as certain as the absolution of St. Peter, yea, as the absolution of Christ would be, were He again to stand visibly before men and say: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." There is no difference; for, mark you! it is not a question of what man must do, but what has been done by Christ.

Suppose an entire city in a rebellious uprising had formed a conspiracy against its sovereign lord, had slain the king's son, and all the citizens had forfeited their lives. Suppose the king's son — to advance beyond the limits of the parable to which I am referring — had come to intercede for the rebels and had induced his father to pardon the rebels, to issue a signed manifesto of amnesty, which the son would undertake to announce to the rebels, either personally or by messengers, assuring his father that the rebels would then again become good and grateful citizens and loyal subjects. Suppose the king would yield to his son and, while remaining quietly in his castle, would send out messengers to read in every street the document of amnesty, crying to the rebel citizens, "You have been pardoned!" — to those very citizens who a few days ago had tremblingly viewed themselves as beaten and expected soon to be executed. What would you think of these rebels if they were to say to the messengers: "We do not believe you; the king will have to come himself and make the announcement to make us believe it"? That would be unparalleled impudence. In the case assumed no one would be so reckless; every one would be glad when the messengers approached him with the royal document, signed and sealed, and would read the proclamation: "Herewith I pardon all rebels. I want them to accept this pardon and become good citizens, as they used to be."

Suppose, furthermore, the messengers did not reach every place, but others who had heard of the pardon were to go into every nook and corner and spread the news, — their announcement would be just as much a decree of pardon as what the messengers were proclaiming. For the pardon would be valid, not because of a special authority of the messengers for offering it, but because the

pardon had been decreed, engrossed, and sealed, because, in a word, it had been confirmed and promulgated in the king's name and by his order.

Now, the case of all mankind is identical with that of those rebels. We are the rebels; our heavenly Father is the King from whom we have revolted, and the Son of God has done everything that was necessary to induce our heavenly King to pardon us. A Lutheran minister, when announcing the forgiveness of sins, or absolving a sinner, does nothing else than communicate to him the intelligence that Christ has interceded for him in his sorry plight and that God has restored him to favor. Moreover, the Lutheran minister does this by order of Christ.

If some one commissions me to tell So-and-so that he has forgiven him, and I execute the commission, the forgiveness is just as valid and effective as if the party himself were to deliver it. Or suppose you had a friend in Germany who had grievously offended you and you would learn that he was suffering great remorse over his action, being full of unrest and worry over his sins, which were torturing him and causing him to fear that God would not receive him into His grace — would you, in a case like this, have to go to Germany to see your friend? Why, you could either write him a letter or ask some acquaintance of yours who is going to Germany to tell your friend that you have forgiven him long ago and that he should no longer worry about the wrong he had done you, because you are fully reconciled to him. Your friend would certainly accept the information as reliable. That is what happens at absolution.

I ask you now, Is there any papistic element in this Lutheran rite? Surely not. For here is the doctrine of the papists for comparison: When a priest absolves, this power of forgiving sins has been vested in him by virtue of his priestly ordination and his having been anointed with chrism. On the part of the person receiving absolution the power, or efficacy, of absolution lies in his contrition, confession, and satisfaction. The papists declare that the requisites of a valid and salutary absolution are: 1. *confessio oris* (oral confession); 2. *contritio cordis* (heartfelt contrition); 3. *satisfactio operis* (compensation for wrong done by the performance of some good work).

In the first place, there must be full, or plenary, confession. In the opinion of the papists any omission in confession renders the entire confession and absolution invalid and ineffectual.

In the second place, the person making confession must feel a perfect contrition and heartfelt remorse, otherwise the keys will fail to open heaven to him.

In the third place, the person confessing must render the satisfaction prescribed by the priest.

There is nothing of these features in our confession. We say that the power, or efficacy, of absolution is not derived from the ordination or consecration of the minister; in fact, it is not in any respect derived from the minister, but 1) from the perfect reconciliation and redemption of Christ; 2) from the command of Christ to preach the Gospel to all men, which means nothing else than to absolve all men, to assure them of the forgiveness of their sins.

To substantiate what I have said, let me offer you a few testimonies from the confessions of our Church and from Luther's writings.

In the *Augsburg Confession,* Art. 25 (Mueller, p. 43 f.; *Triglot Conc.,* p. 69): "The people are most carefully taught concerning faith in the absolution, about which formerly there was profound silence. Our people are taught that they should highly prize the absolution as being the voice of God and pronounced by God's command. The power of the keys is set forth in its beauty, and they are reminded what great consolations it brings to anxious consciences; also, that God requires faith to believe such absolution as a voice sounding from heaven and that such faith in Christ truly obtains and receives the forgiveness of sins. Aforetime satisfactions were immoderately extolled; of faith and the merit of Christ and the righteousness of faith no mention was made."

The Augsburg Confession wants us to regard absolution, not as the word of a human being who happens to pronounce the same, but as the word of God forgiving men's sins. This is usually understood to mean that the words of absolution are taken from the Bible and in that sense are the Word of God. But the meaning is that the announcement by a minister to a poor sinner, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," are tantamount to God's pronouncing those words. For the minister absolves, not because he is a peculiar personage possessing extraordinary power, but because God has commanded that in His name and in His stead men's sins be forgiven them. It makes no difference whether God or a minister makes the announcement. Accordingly, our Confession tells us to believe firmly that what the minister says at absolution is what the almighty God Himself, who determines this matter, is saying to me.

But the objection is raised, How can a minister forgive sins? That is the same perverse and foolish objection which the Pharisees raised when they said about Christ: "This man blasphemeth." Matt. 9, 3. They imagined that Jesus was attempting something that was impossible. When the objectors are told that man forgives sin in God's stead, they want to know how that is possible. Of course, absolution would be invalid if God had not commanded it. But God has commanded it, just as I can instruct some one to make a communication in my place to an enemy of mine, informing him that I am reconciled to him. At absolution we say nothing but what has happened. That is the precious truth that forgiveness of sins has been acquired. If we would only truly believe in absolution, with what joy would we attend church whenever it is pronounced!

But few, very few, there are, even among Lutherans, who truly believe in absolution. That is the curse of false teaching. By incorrect preaching men are deprived of their most precious treasures. The fanatics admit that absolution is taught in the Bible, but the Bible statements must not be taken as they read. That is a teaching worthy of the devil's reward. For we must surely take the Bible as it reads. Are we to get its meaning by reading between the lines? God will call every one to account who treats His Word in such scurrilous fashion. A true Lutheran relies on God's Word and is unconcerned even though the whole world were to ridicule and despise him for it. He does not consider the world an authority in religious matters; he rests his faith on higher authority. Agreeably with the Augsburg Confession he regards absolution as an announcement in God's stead and by God's command.

Many unionists claim untruthfully that they subscribe to the Augsburg Confession. If they really did, they would not, on reading the above statement concerning absolution, cry: "Away with that papistic book!" They never did examine the Confessions of our Church, nor did they investigate our doctrine of absolution.

The Augsburg Confession states that its adherents teach with great diligence how comforting and necessary the Power of the Keys is to persons whose conscience has become alarmed. Among the fanatical sects many spend their lives in a state of despair because they do not "feel" what they would like to feel and finally pass away in their despair and are lost. If they would only know our doctrine of firm faith in absolution! They would approach God and say: "Heavenly Father, I have been absolved according

to Thy command by So-and-so. I know that Thou art ever truthful and canst not deceive me." God would answer them: "That is right; I am never proved a liar; I keep my promises." But the people must be taught how to arrive at this assurance.

To the statement of the Augsburg Confession that God requires faith in absolution, as if it were His own voice speaking to the sinner from heaven, the objection may be raised by some of you: "Is a godless person, then, to believe that he has been absolved?" Indeed, that is what God requires, and the person is in duty bound to believe this or lose the salvation of his soul. A different question would be whether he can believe it; for his conscience will denounce his attempt to believe it by casting up to him that he does not intend to come to God because he is living, and proposes to continue living, in sin, without any regard for God. Nevertheless, he ought to believe it. Ought God to require that we do not believe what He says? God has commanded to preach the Gospel to the whole world. This Gospel men are to believe. When absolution is pronounced to a person, the Gospel is brought to that individual; for the Gospel is nothing else than absolution.

The Augsburg Confession charges the papists with suppressing absolution by their doctrine of confession, which they regard as the chief matter. When a Catholic layman has confessed and received absolution, the idea that he must now believe himself reconciled with God never enters his mind. He is only concerned about having made a clean breast of everything. If he omitted something in his confession because he wished to escape a great and onerous satisfaction that would be imposed on him, he departs from the confessional with the tormenting reflection that all has been to no purpose. *We* tell the poor sinner to come and receive absolution, to believe that he has been forgiven when the words are pronounced, even though he were coming to confession fresh from committing the most heinous crime. We tell him that God requires of him nothing but that he accept what Christ by His meritorious life, suffering, and death has procured for him.

Even in the Lutheran Church this teaching was formerly greatly neglected. Poor sinners were admonished that they must feel a genuine contrition, that they must be really crushed, and that they must frame really good resolutions. But they were not told to come even if they could hardly crawl, even if they had to confess themselves the worst sinners, and to believe that the door of grace was open to them and that they need only accept what was offered

them. If these latter facts were emphasized, there would be more Christians. For these facts do not make men secure, but quicken them to faith and a renewal of their lives. They begin to feel the great love that God has shown them and to rejoice because of His own free grace. He has taken from them all their sins and adorned them with the garment of Christ's righteousness.

In the *Apology*, Art. XII, § 39 (Mueller, p. 166; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 261), we read: "The Power of the Keys administers and presents the Gospel through absolution, which proclaims peace to me and is the true voice of the Gospel." This was the assurance our forefathers had: The Gospel announces absolution to us; for it is practically an epitome of the Gospel, an extract drawn from it, which treats of faith and Christian justification. Its quintessence is the single statement: "In Christ's stead I forgive thee all thy sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

In his *Church Postil, Luther* says (St. L. Ed. XII, 1586): "This, then, is the benefit of the suffering and resurrection of Christ, that these acts were performed, not in His own, but in our behalf, in order that He might bruise under His heel the devil and all my sins which He bore in His body on Good Friday. Now the devil flees at the mere mention of Christ's name. Now, then, if you want to make use of these great treasures, behold, He has made a present of them to you. Only accord Him this much honor that you accept them gratefully." Luther means to say: You need not kneel down and pray that He make you a present of these treasures. He has already given you all.

In the same book, *Luther* says (St. L. Ed. XI, 1104): "It is not of our doing, neither can it be merited by our works; everything has been given and is being offered to you. All you have to do is to open your mouth, or rather your heart, hold still, and let Him fill it. Ps. 81, 11."

In his *Large Catechism*, in the exposition of the Fifth Petition, § 88, *Luther* says (Mueller, p. 485; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 723): "Therefore there is here again great need to call upon God and to pray: Dear Father, forgive us our trespasses. Not as though He did not forgive sin without and even before our prayer (for He has given us the Gospel, in which is pure forgiveness before we prayed or ever thought of it). But this is to the intent that we may recognize and accept such forgiveness."

This is a remarkable passage. We are not to think that the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer proves that to obtain forgiveness

we must first pray for it. The object of this petition is not to show that there is no forgiveness until we pray for it, but to remind us of the fact that it lies ready for us and that this fact is to strengthen our faith. In a similar manner Luther says regarding our prayer at meat: "God gives daily bread, even without our prayer, to all wicked men; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to know it and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving." (Mueller, 371; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 547.)

In his *House Postil, Luther* says (St. L. Ed. XIII a, 978 ff.): "After our dear Lord Christ has thus addressed the paralytic and forgiven him his sins, the scribes start up and charge Him with blaspheming God by pretending to forgive sins. Now, here is an essential point of great importance, which we are to note diligently. For we observe in all fanatics and the whole rabble of sectarians this error, that they fail to understand how sins are forgiven. Ask the Pope and all his divines, and you will find that they cannot tell you what absolution accomplishes. *The entire Papacy is built up on the teaching that grace is infused into men by some secret operation* and that it is obtained by contrition, confession, and satisfaction. If you ask them what absolution and the Keys effect, they tell you that it is an external ordinance observed in the Church. Accordingly, they do not base the forgiveness of sins on God's Word and on faith, on which they must be based, but on our contrition, confession, and satisfaction. But this is an altogether fictitious teaching, by which people are misled and pointed the wrong way."

The Gospel pericope for the 19th Sunday after Trinity, as you know, treats of the absolution of the paralytic by Christ, which drew from the Pharisees the angry question: "Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Luke 5, 21. Christ shows them that as the Son of Man He has absolved the paralytic, and, moved by the Holy Ghost, the people "marveled and glorified God, which had given such power unto men." Matt. 9, 8. Why did Matthew embody this exclamation of the people in his Gospel? Because it was a statement which the Holy Spirit had stirred them up to make. Christ does not say: "O no; God did not give this power to *men*, as He gave it to Me," but He assures us that this power was indeed given to *men*. The Lord Christ does not intend to walk about in the world in visible, human form, proclaiming to men the forgiveness of their sins, but He has commanded His Christians to do this. Yea, He has ordained a peculiar office, the incumbents of which have nothing

else to do than to keep on saying to men what Christ said to the paralytic. We are to proclaim this truth to all our fellow-men. Why? Because everything necessary to our salvation has been accomplished, and any person believing this believes, not us, but God, and, believing, he has what the absolution declares.

Luther's remarks about the basis on which the Papacy is built up might be amplified by including the sects; for they all, without exception, teach that forgiveness of sins must be obtained by praying, struggling, and wrestling with God until one feels the soothing sensation that grace has been infused into him. However, that is a sheer delusion; for grace cannot be infused into men, since it is the disposition of God outside of ourselves, in heaven. It can only be proclaimed to us. True rest, therefore, can be given us only through the Word, either when we hear it preached or when we read it. From every chapter of the Bible we can get absolution; for there is not a chapter but tells us that our sins have been forgiven. Every little passage which states that God will be merciful is an absolution. That is why Luther says that an evangelical minister cannot open his mouth without pronouncing absolution. It is really so. Mark you, I am speaking of a genuinely evangelical minister. A legalistic preacher cannot do this; he preaches people into despair and hell, while an evangelical preacher lifts even the greatest sinner out of hell. Of course, when sinners talk like the rebels of whom I spoke and who, on hearing that their king had pardoned them, refused his grace and wanted to murder his Son, to hang him, they will, as a natural consequence, go to the gallows, not because grace has not been offered them, but because they would not accept it.

Some, when reading a letter of indulgence issued by the Pope, say: "Of course, sins must also be repented of; moreover, one must go to confession and render the satisfaction imposed by the priest; otherwise the letter of indulgence will be of no benefit." And these ignorant, deluded men will claim that the Pope is not so bad because he demands three requisites for absolution: contrition, confession, and absolution. But this is a horrible, infernal, diabolical blindness; for the Pope's practise subverts the entire Gospel. According to the Pope's teaching the sinner seeking absolution must do three things, and what is worst, faith is not one of these requisites. The people are told merely to be contrite, crushed, and to confess. If their contrition is not perfect, the priests will remit somewhat of the penitential rigor and be satisfied with attri-

tion.* They admit indeed that for a plenary absolution from all sins it is better to have contrition. Moreover, as a rule, the priests are so accommodating as to impose on the people only a really trifling satisfaction, such as reciting ten Paternosters or putting a contribution into the alms-box, etc. By putting in a small contribution, the people imagine they have settled their account. Or they may be told to eat fish on a day on which they usually eat meat. All this is nothing but a diabolical humbug, wrought upon the people by reckless spirits, bent on leading the people astray.

However, my time is up. I believe, the subject is of sufficient importance to justify our taking it up once more, for the purpose of examining a few beautiful testimonies. Then we shall study more particularly these words in our thesis: "until they feel that God has received them into grace." This important part of our thesis has not been fully treated as yet. A proper indoctrination is needed by you more than by pastors in Germany; for you are living in the land of sects. Our poor people are observing the great show of sanctity which the sectarians display and are easily misled by it. For they imagine, to really save their souls they must join the strictest sect; that would insure their salvation. Alas! can the sects save any one? There is but one Savior; a person who does not trust Him completely to bring him into heaven alone, verily, will not enter heaven. For Jesus Christ alone is the Door to heaven.

EIGHTEENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(February 13, 1885.)

Without question, my friends, the condition of a prisoner who is awaiting execution for his misdeeds and is unable to verify a vague rumor of his pardon is dreadful. He starts at every creaking of the door of his prison because he does not know whether the person coming to see him is bringing him his authentic and definite pardon or is to take him to the place of execution. At such

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* *Smalc. Art.*, Part III, Art. III, § 16: "Since no one could know how great the contrition ought to be in order to be sufficient before God, they gave this consolation: He who could not have contrition, at least ought to have attrition, which I may call half a contrition or the beginning of contrition; for they themselves have understood neither of these terms, nor do they understand them now, as little as I. Such attrition was reckoned as contrition when a person went to confession." (Mueller, p. 319; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 483.)

a time only a completely depraved, reckless, and abandoned atheist would be capable of jesting and frolicking.

In a spiritual view every person is by nature in a similar condition. Since the human race, in its progenitors, fell away from God, every person is by nature under a divine sentence of temporal and eternal death. True, every person has heard a vague rumor that God has pardoned him, but he cannot arrive at any certainty about it. In any mortal illness, in any great calamity, especially in moments when his heart and conscience are filled with unrest, dread, and terror, he has the sensation that the portals of eternity are swinging open to receive him, but the poor wretch does not know whether he is entering into eternal death or eternal life. In such a state of mind only the most abandoned can preserve an outward calm; every other person will quake and tremble. Though he may have laughed at holy matters, he will not feel like laughing then.

Can you imagine that the loving, kind, gracious, and merciful God has done nothing to make us certain that we have the forgiveness of our sins and that in yonder world we shall enter the mansions of eternal peace and rest? Did He really do nothing to rescue us out of our dreadful condition? It is impossible that He should have done such a thing. Assuredly, God has done something; yea, He has done something so great that it exceeds our conception. He sent His only-begotten Son into this world, had Him become a human being like us, laid the burden of our sins upon Him, and gave Him up to be crucified for the atonement of our sins. It is impossible to imagine that, having done all this, He would during our whole life leave us in a dreadful state of ignorance whether He is still our enemy and whether our dying day will be our Judgment Day. No; as soon as the eternal Son of God had become man and entered into this world, the highest messenger was dispatched from the throne of grace to this earth to proclaim to the shepherds at Bethlehem, and in them to us, to all of us, to the entire world: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2, 10. 11. After Christ had finished His great work, after God the Father had raised Him from the dead and therewith pronounced Him, our Surety and Substitute, free from all guilt, and had justified and absolved us all in Him, Christ commanded His disciples: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel," that is, the joyous message of the finished redemption, "to every crea-

ture," Mark 16, 15, adding these words: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," Matt. 28, 20. With these words Christ testified that the joyous message which He was committing to His disciples is to echo throughout this terrestrial globe until the Last Day.

In view of this, are we not blessed, highly favored men? Our bliss beggars description. Heaven and earth are full of the goodness and grace of the Lord, our God. Anywhere and everywhere all things cry to us: "You are redeemed; your sins are forgiven; heaven is thrown open to you. Oh, believe it, do believe it, and you have this bliss."

But, alas! this unspeakable joy is sadly vitiated to our highly favored race by false doctrine. That we noted in our study during the last three evening lectures. Let us strengthen the conviction which we have gained still more, first, in order that we may not make the cup of inexpressible joy which the Father in heaven has filled for us bitter to ourselves, and secondly, in order that upon your initiation into the office by which reconciliation is proclaimed you may not withhold from men what God has given them long ago, yea, what He had designed for them from eternity.

The ninth thesis, now before us, is really the central thesis in this entire series. Any one who understands this thesis can rightly divide Law and Gospel; but any one who does not understand it will never learn the division by any other rules.

We have seen that the rejection of absolution by sectarian preachers proves that they do not know how to divide Law and Gospel. They have not only an entirely incorrect conception of the character of absolution and of our doctrine of absolution, but, observing that outwardly we seem to do like the papists, they also reject our doctrine of absolution as a papistic notion. But though the papists use ever so sweet terms in pronouncing absolution, nevertheless they are offering the people husks, with the kernel removed. We keep the precious words of absolution, but we also seek to offer the kernel to those who seek absolution and invite them to relish it.

In the Gospel pericope for the 19th Sunday after Trinity we have the story of the paralytic whose sins the Lord forgave. This action of the Lord Jesus induced murmuring on the part of the hypocritical Pharisees, who said: "This man blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins except God alone?" They imagined they had manifested great wisdom in their criticism of the Lord. But the Lord promptly hushed them. He asked them: "Whether is easier,

to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk?" Matt. 9, 5. They refused to make a reply because they knew the Lord would catch them in their own words. If they would say: "It is easier to say to a person, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' than to say to a paralytic, 'Arise and walk,' " they were afraid that He might say the latter, for the Lord had by that time performed many miracles. And, behold, the Lord proves His ability to cure paralysis miraculously; for upon His word the man sick of the palsy takes up his bed and goes to his house rejoicing. The people who witnessed all this knew that Christ was a man — which He was indeed. His miracle did not offend them because He had already given them powerful evidences that He was also the Son of God. And now they begin glorifying God for having given to *men* the power to forgive sins.

If this had been a superstitious notion of the people, the Holy Spirit would surely have added a remark to this effect: The poor people imagined, contrary to fact, that such power had been given to men. Not a word of this in the evangelists' account. The Holy Ghost inspired the people to make that statement, and while they made it, they may have reflected on their happy condition under such a Messiah. For when people have been kept in a poor pasture spiritually, where the consolations of the Gospel were vitiated to them, and they have become famished sheep, the usual experience is that they lay hold with eager joy on the luscious grass of the pure Gospel when it is brought to them.

Instances of this can be observed in Germany. The churches of rationalists are empty, but every church whose pulpit is occupied by one who preaches with the manifestation of the Spirit and of power, is filled. The people still have their Bibles, their catechisms, their old hymn-books; they cling to the old Bible-passages which they have learned; they relish their old devotional books, and when they get a live minister, who preaches the Gospel to them, they are overjoyed.

Alas! there are other preachers, who, while they are believers, preach in such high-flown language that it passes the comprehension of the people. In such instances we behold the spectacle of a believing pastor and a congregation of spiritually dead people. Not only must we proclaim the truth, we must also speak a language so simple that a peasant listening outside of the sanctuary can understand it and feel himself drawn into the church. With noonday clearness we must show the one way of salvation than which there is no other. It would not be surprising if God were to hurl

His lightning at every preacher who has filled his manuscript with high-flown terms, intending to shine by his oratory. Such language is not understood by the common people. It may, at best, enter their intellect, but it does not enter their hearts, where it ought to lodge.

Let us hear what *Luther* writes in his *House Postil,* in his exposition of the Gospel pericope for the 19th Sunday after Trinity (St. L. Ed. XIIIa, 917): "The Anabaptists likewise say: How can we receive forgiveness of sins through Baptism? There is nothing but a handful of water there. If we are to be really purged from sin, the Holy Spirit must do it; water cannot do it. In this manner they take forgiveness of sins away from the Word and refuse to leave the matter where the good people in the Gospel put it, who glorified God for giving such power unto men. The Sacramentarian fanatics, likewise, say that in the Sacrament there is mere bread and wine, hence forgiveness of sin cannot be found there. The Spirit must provide that; the flesh profits nothing.

"To sum up, no sectarian spirit, no priest or monk has been able to see that forgiving sins is a power conferred on men, as this Gospel-lesson states. Learn, then, how to speak of this matter. I know well enough, and also confess, that God alone forgives sin. But I must know, too, how I may perceive that my sins are forgiven or by what means this is done. Regarding this point the Holy Scriptures teach me and all Christians, when we desire forgiveness of sin, that we must not sit down in some nook with the prayer: My God, forgive me my sins, and then wait for an angel to come from heaven with the announcement: Thy sins are forgiven thee. For God promises that He will descend in His Word and there assure me of the forgiveness of my sins.

"Now, this is done, first, in Holy Baptism, which is connected with God's command to baptize men in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; furthermore, with the promise: 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' You object: Is not Baptism mere water? True, but this water is not alone; God's Word goes with it. Likewise, when you go to your pastor, who has been given a special commission, or to any other Christian and desire to be comforted and absolved from your sins, and he says to you: I, in God's place, announce to you through Christ forgiveness of all your sins, — when this happens, you are to be certain that by such external word your sins are truly and surely forgiven; for Baptism and God's Word will not prove lying devices to you. Such things were not preached in the Romish Church,

and to this day no papistic preacher understands them. Therefore thank God for this mercy and learn that God wants to forgive sins in no other way than is here written, *viz.*, by giving the power to do it to men. Christ here makes a beginning of this power and later commands that henceforth to the end of the world this order is to be observed in the Church, that repentance and forgiveness of sins are to be preached. Let every one, then, learn that he must seek forgiveness of sins from men and nowhere else. For thus reads the command of our Lord Christ: 'Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven,' Matt. 18, 18; likewise: 'Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them,' John 20, 23. For God will not tolerate the building of special ladders and stairways to heaven to suit every individual; He alone wants to be the Architect.

"Accordingly, if you desire forgiveness of sins, go and be baptized if you are still unbaptized; or if you have been baptized, keep in remembrance the promise which God made you at your baptism and be not unbelieving. Likewise, go and be reconciled to your fellow-man and then ask for absolution. And as you hear the announcement of the forgiveness of your sins in the name of Jesus, believe it, and, verily, you have it. After that go to the most venerable Sacrament and receive the body and blood of Christ unto the assurance that this precious treasure is meant for you and that you may enjoy it as your own, etc. Baptism, absolution, preaching, and the Sacrament are not to be despised, but in them forgiveness of sin is to be sought and obtained. To this end God has called and commissioned your pastor, your father and mother, and your closest Christian fellow-men and has put His Word in their mouth, that you are to seek consolation and forgiveness of sin from them. For although men are talking to you, still, what they say is not their own, but God's Word. Therefore you are to believe it firmly and not to despise it. . . .

"The Anabaptists, then, and other sects have lost at one stroke the forgiveness of sins, Baptism, the Sacrament, the Christian Church, and all Christian works because they reject the Word when they hear it from their fellow-man and regard it as nothing better than the bleating of a calf. Well, suppose God were to speak to you through some cow or other animal, as once upon a time He spoke through an ass, still you are not to despise His Word, but regard it as valid. Why, then, will you despise it when men speak it by the command and order of God? For though you hear, indeed, a man's voice, you do not hear a man's, but God's Word

and surely will receive the forgiveness of sins attached to it, if you will but accept it by faith."

The people whom Luther criticizes look upon the baptismal water with the eyes of a cow and imagine we teach that our help is to be derived from water. Ah! it is not the water that helps. No peculiar virtue has been put into the water. Baptismal water is water like other water, but it is connected with this Word of God: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." When these words are added to the water in Baptism, baptismal water becomes as precious as, yea, more precious than, heaven and earth and all the treasures of the world. Since God wants to save us only by grace and exclusively through faith, He tells us: "Thou wishest to be saved. Very well, be baptized and believe My promise; and as truly as I am God, thou wilt be saved. Thou art not to look upon yourself and ask, What am *I* to do towards my salvation? Thou remainest a condemned sinner and obtainest salvation from the free grace and mercy of God." The Anabaptists construct an entirely new way, concerning which the Bible does not say a word, namely, that men are to struggle until they can say, "Now I feel that I have obtained grace." That is an awful doctrine, much more harmful than most men imagine.

Just reflect on a case like this: You have quite grievously insulted some one; the recollection of your act torments you, and you desire pardon and the restoration of friendship with the person you have insulted. How are you to become assured that he has forgiven you? Will you wait until your heart has a feeling of relief, which makes you think that your former friend has forgiven you? If you adopt that plan, everybody will tell you that you are silly; for the important point is not how *you* feel, but how the party feels whom you insulted. Or will you obtain assurance of having been forgiven by receiving a gift from your former friend? No; that would increase your uncertainty, for the insulted party may want to make you feel that he is not a wretch like you. He may want to make you thoroughly ashamed of yourself by gathering fiery coals upon your head. Now, what other way is there to arrive at the assurance that you have been forgiven? None other than this: the insulted party must *tell* you that he has forgiven you. When he comes to tell you not to worry about his being angry with you because of the insult you offered him, when he says: "Your action was indeed abominable, but all has been forgiven; cheer up, we want to be friends again," then you know — do you not? — that he has forgiven you. Our case with God is identical with this.

You cannot infer from your feelings or from the divine blessings showered upon you that God has forgiven you; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain upon the just and the unjust. You can draw that inference only from the fact that He *tells* you that you have been forgiven. A person seeking for this assurance in any other way will not find it, but only deceive himself by imagining that he has found it in some other way.

But where does God tell us that He has forgiven us? Why, in His Word, in the Gospel, in Baptism, in the Lord's Supper, at absolution. In the Holy Supper the real gift of grace which we take from it is not our partaking of the body and blood of Christ, but the promise of the forgiveness of sins which Christ has attached to the promise of His body and blood to be received by us: "which is given for you," "which is shed for the remission of sins." The body and blood of Christ are but the royal seal which the Savior affixes to His words. Briefly, then, in everything that God does to assure us of His grace the Word occupies first place.

This applies also to absolution. Here, too, the Word is of paramount importance. That is the reason why we are not to waste much precious time waiting for an angel to come from heaven with the announcement of our forgiveness. God has given us no promise to that effect. If He had, we could indeed confidently ask for such a messenger; for although we are poor sinners, God is willing to bestow on us the greatest gifts. What He has promised He will perform. He says: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Ps. 81, 10. He has promised us forgiveness of our sins; if we believe that, we have it. But people will not believe this.

Calvin was dissatisfied with Zwingli's interpretation of the Lord's Supper, but his own interpretation was also wrong. He said that a person desiring to receive the body and blood of Christ could not get it under the bread and wine, but must by his faith mount up to heaven, where the Holy Spirit would negotiate a way for feeding him with the body and blood of Christ. These are mere vagaries, which originated in Calvin's fancy. But an incident like this shows that men will not believe that God bears us poor sinners such great love that He is willing to come to us. The fanatics think that they must ascend to Him, while He has already descended to us. This is not surprising; for the Gospel is that kind of doctrine that it is a stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. It is that still, not only to the circumcised Hebrews and to the uncircumcised heathen, but even to thousands upon thousands in Christendom.

Note, lastly, that in the citation just adduced Luther admits no difference between absolution by an ordained minister and absolution by a layman. Of this matter we shall hear more anon.

Furthermore, Luther writes in his *Gospel Postil* (St. L. Ed. XI, 731f.), commenting on the words: "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosesoever sins ye remit," etc., as follows: "Christ means to say: Whenever you pronounce a word of absolution upon a sinner, that shall have been spoken in heaven and shall be as valid as if God Himself had uttered it. For He is in your mouth; therefore your speaking amounts to His speaking. Now, it is certainly true that when Christ, the Lord over sin and hell, speaks these words over you: 'Thy sins shall be removed,' they must be removed, and nothing shall hinder it. Again, when He says: 'Thy sins shall not be forgiven thee,' they remain unforgiven; and though you should exhaust your utmost strength in the effort, neither yourself nor an angel nor a saint nor any creature could forgive your sin. The power to do this, however, is vested in every Christian. . . . It is a power which we derive from the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

"However, in order not to fall into the ways of the Pope, we must treat this matter carefully. The papists have forced upon the words of Christ this meaning, that *they* possess the power of which Christ speaks and whatsoever and in whatsoever manner *they* speak, must come to pass *because they have said so.* No, Mr. Pope, that power you have not; only the Divine Majesty has it. They say, when the Pope utters one word conveying absolution, a person's sins are gone, even if he is void of both contrition and faith. Accordingly, they imagine it is in their power to give or take away, open or close heaven, or cast people into hell. It will be a long time before that will happen. For from this claim it would follow that our salvation is based on human works, power, and authority.

"Now, since this claim is contrary to the entire Holy Scriptures, it cannot be, O Pope, that when *you* close or open, a closing or opening must take place *because of you.* The true interpretation of the words of Christ: 'Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them,' etc., is, that they establish the authority, not of the person who speaks, but of those who believe these words."

If Christ were not risen, we could not administer absolution; for on what would we base it? Not until God the Father had acknowledged the work of Christ's reconciliation and redemption,

not until He had absolved Christ, and in Him all men, by raising Christ from the dead, have we mortals become justified in saying to a fellow-man: "Be of good cheer, all thy sins are forgiven and their record is wiped out. Only believe!" This declaration is based on the fact that God the Father has glorified Christ, our Proxy, and therewith has proclaimed in the presence of heaven and earth that all men are redeemed and reconciled and their sins forgiven.

During my first visit in Germany more than thirty years ago, I heard, to my regret, from a highly esteemed, believing minister the statement that a layman may proclaim truths of great comfort to others, but that he cannot administer absolution, that being a privilege which God has reserved for ministers, ordained and installed by the Church. The conception which this clergyman had of absolution was none other than that of the papists. I fought the view which he had expressed strenuously, but without success. The statement, repeated after the Pope, that sins are forgiven when a minister makes a statement to that effect, but not when a layman does so, is simply awful.

No; the removal of sins is not based on a mysterious power of the pastor, but on the fact that Christ has taken away the sins of the world long ago and that everybody is to tell this fact to his fellow-men. This is the duty, naturally, especially of preachers, not, however, because of a peculiar power inherent in them, but because God has ordained their office for the administration of the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments. In an emergency it becomes evident that a layman has the authority to do what a prelate or a superintendent does, and to do it just as effectually.

You can see from all these facts that our doctrine of absolution is the very opposite of the papists' doctrine. It does not contain a trace of papism. The Pope curses and abominates our doctrine. Does he not make the sweeping statement that no person can be certain of his salvation or his justification? Bellarmine, called the greatest of the papistic theologians, writes, in his chapter on "Justification" (chap. 3): "The doctrine that in the present life men cannot attain to an assurance of faith regarding their righteousness, with the exception of a few whom God deems worthy to have this fact revealed to them by a special revelation — this doctrine is a current opinion among nearly all theologians." He means to say: "I shall give you the Bible and ask you to find your name in it, and particularly the assurance that your sins have been forgiven. You will not find it. But there are a few men, like Peter and Paul, to whom God has revealed this fact in a supernatural manner.

But you cannot be certain of your justification and salvation." Is not this an abominable doctrine of the devil? The Romish Church calls itself the mother of all churches, and yet it robs Christians of all comfort; it tells them to their face: "You cannot be certain that you will be saved. You will have to wait until after your death, until you enter eternity, to find this out from your actual experience." There is a terrible, diabolical cruelty in this teaching.

Over against the worthiness of the confessor, Luther emphasizes the importance of faith in absolution. Even if the confessor were a perfectly holy person, without the least unrighteousness, and free from every blemish, yea, if he were an exemplary saint, that would not contribute one iota to the validity of absolution. But the Word of the Gospel, without which no one can obtain salvation, is powerful and salutary, making absolution valid. This is what the faith that saves grasps and builds upon, rather than the personality of the party pronouncing absolution.

Let me present one more citation from Luther's incomparable treatise *On the Keys*. For myself I have to confess that it was from this treatise that I first learned what the Gospel is, at a time when I thought I knew it, but did not. I shall praise and thank God for this forever. When I became a Christian, you know, I got among the Pietists. The reading of Luther's writings brought me around to the pure doctrine.

Luther had written a treatise on the keys previous to this. On reading it over, he did not like it and wanted to destroy it. Vitus Dietrich heard of his intention and begged him most earnestly to send him the treatise. Luther complied with the request on condition that the treatise be not published, nor was Dietrich to show it to anybody, because the treatise did not measure up to Luther's plan, and Luther decided to write another treatise. But it was published nevertheless in the eighteenth century. I possess a copy of it. It is a very excellent treatise, but surpassed by the second treatise, from which I shall quote.

Luther says (St. L. Ed. XIX, 943 ff.): "Consider, furthermore, that the keys, or the forgiveness of sins, are not based on our contrition or worthiness, as our adversaries teach perversely. Their teaching is utterly Palagian, Turkish, heathenish, Jewish, Anabaptistic, fanatical and antichristian. On the contrary, our contrition, our works, our believing heart, and all that we are, must be built up on the keys, and with entire boldness we must confidently trust in them as in God's Word, never doubting in the least, as dearly as we love our

body and soul, that what the keys state and confer is as certain as if it were stated and conferred by God Himself. For it is certainly He that is speaking in this matter, since it is His command and Word, not the word or command of man. If you doubt this, you make God a liar, pervert His ordinance, and found His keys on your contrition and worthiness. True, you must be contrite, but to think that the forgiveness of sins is to be made sure and the work of the keys confirmed by your contrition means to forsake the faith and deny Christ. He does not propose to forgive and remit sins for your sake, but for His own sake, from pure grace, by means of the keys.

"Christ says: 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth,' etc. Observe that He promises most assuredly that what *we* bind or loose *on earth* shall be bound or loosed. *These keys work without a fault.* He does not say: What I bind or loose *in heaven* you shall also bind or loose on earth, as the teachers of faulty keys foolishly assert. When would we learn what God binds or looses in heaven? Never. Well, then the keys would be useless and their application futile.

"Nor does He say: You must know what I bind or loose in heaven. Who could know that? But this is what He says: Bind and loose on earth, and I shall bind and loose with you in heaven. Do the work of the keys, and I shall do it also. Yea, when ye have done it, it shall be accounted as done, and there will be no need of My doing it after you. I am telling you that what you bind or loose need not be bound or loosed by Me, but shall be bound or loosed without My binding and loosing. Your work and Mine shall be one identical operation, not two operations. Do *your* work, and *Mine* shall already be accomplished. Bind and loose, and I shall have bound and loosed. He obligates Himself to enter into our work. Yea, He commands us to do His own work. Why, then, should we make everything uncertain by inverting the process and claiming that He must first bind and loose in heaven? As if His binding and loosing in heaven were different from our binding and loosing on earth, or as if He had keys in heaven different from those on earth, when He plainly and clearly states that these keys are the keys of heaven, not of the earth.

"*These ideas of two kinds of keys arise when men do not regard God's Word as God's Word, but as men's word because it is spoken by men.* People imagine God up in heaven to be far, far away from His Word here on earth. They stand gaping towards heaven for His Word and fabricate other keys, different from those we have. . . . Be not deceived by such pharisaical prattle, by which

they deceive themselves, saying, How can a man forgive sin when He cannot bestow grace nor the Holy Ghost? Cling to the words of Christ, and *be assured that God has no other way of forgiving sin than by the Word which He has commanded us to speak. If you do not seek forgiveness in His Word, it is in vain for you to stand gaping towards heaven for grace, or for what they call 'inner forgiveness.'*

"I hear you raising the objection which sectarian spirits and sophists raise, saying: Bah, many hear of the binding and loosing by means of the keys; but they do not mind it and stay unbound and unloosed. Therefore there is something else needed besides the Word and the keys: *the efficient force is the Spirit, the Spirit, none other than the Spirit.* Do you really believe that, when a person refuses to believe in the binding key, he remains not bound? Let me tell you that in due time he will find out that his being bound on account of unbelief was not a futile act and did not fail of the intended effect. *Likewise, a person who refuses to believe that he has been released and that his sins have been forgiven will find out in due time how surely his sins had been forgiven him in this present time while he refused to believe it.* St. Paul says, Rom. 3, 3: 'What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect?' Our present discussion is not about believing or not believing in the keys. We are well aware that few believe in them. But we are speaking of what the keys effect and give. Of course, if a person does not accept what they give, he has nothing; but that is not the fault of the keys. Many disbelieve the Gospel, but that does not make the Gospel a failure or a lying message. A king gives you a castle; if you do not accept it, that does not make the king a liar nor his gift spurious. You have cheated yourself; it is entirely your own fault; the king certainly gave you the castle."

It is a fine list of predicates that Luther, at the beginning of this citation, applies to his adversaries. But he is right. As soon as I stake my interests on my own contrition, I do not need Christ. Contrition is necessary, but not as a means for acquiring forgiveness of sins. If I am a proud Pharisee, what do I care for the forgiveness of sins? I shall be like the surfeited glutton who turns up the nose at the finest food and drink that is set before him. Most nominal Christians are so utterly surfeited that they will decline this precious food for their soul with a disgusted *no*.

Contrition, then, is necessary. Let us not misunderstand our good Luther. He did not proclaim the consolations of the Gospel

to sinners living in carnal security; he gave them no comfort. But when a person was contrite and longed for forgiveness of sins, he would say to him: Here it is; take it, and you have it.

Luther is right also in advising men not to inquire at all about the quality and sufficiency of their contrition. For any person to build his hope on that means to build it on sand. On the contrary, a person is to praise God for the absolution he has received; that makes his contrition salutary. The right procedure is not to base the validity of absolution on our own contrition, but to make our contrition rest on our absolution.

Luther insists on faith in the declaration of Christ: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." To disbelieve this statement is tantamount to making Christ a liar. Though a minister pronounce the absolution to such a person ten times, it would not benefit him. We cannot look into people's hearts; but that is not necessary at all; we are to look only in the Word of our heavenly Father, which informs us that God has absolved the entire world. That assures us that all sins have been forgiven to all men.

Query: Does this apply also to an impious scoundrel, who may be plotting burglary to-night, with the object of stealing and robbing? Indeed it does. The reason why he is not benefited by absolution is because he does not accept the forgiveness offered him; for he does not believe in his absolution. If he believed the Holy Spirit, he would quit stealing.

Another query: Is it right to absolve a scoundrel of this kind? Answer: If he is known to you as a scoundrel, it is wrong because you know that he will not accept forgiveness. Knowing this, you would commit a great and grievous sin by performing the sacred act of absolution for him and thus cast your pearls before swine. But absolution itself is always valid. If Judas had received absolution, his sins would have been forgiven by God; but he would have had to accept forgiveness. To obtain this treasure, there must be one who bestows it, and another who receives it. An unbeliever may imagine and even say that he accepts forgiveness, but in his heart he is resolved to continue his sinful life and to prefer serving the devil. Hence the true doctrine of absolution does not make men secure, but thoroughly and radically plucks them out of the devil's kingdom. That is something altogether different from what moralists are doing when they put a white veneer on a black personality.

Luther's remarks about faulty keys are directed against the abominable false teaching of the papists. When they are asked

whether they absolve also scoundrels and what the benefit of absolution is in such a case, they reply that in such a case the key is faulty because it will not fit into that particular key-hole and the right key has not been furnished them. Our key is never faulty, because we only repeat what God has spoken. It is man that is at fault. If he is impenitent, he is not benefited by the application of the releasing key, but he only increases his damnation twofold.

Note Luther's remark that we have the keys of heaven here on earth.

As to the so-called "inner forgiveness" on which fanatics insist as being a matter of chief importance, they never know whether theirs is really the inner, or heartfelt, forgiveness of the Holy Spirit or of their own spirit of fanaticism.

It is certainly true what Luther points out, *viz.*, that on the Last Day many will be surprised when God will recount to them all the Sundays on which He stood ready to absolve them, while they would not believe Him and thus made Him a liar. They will see that they have often stood at the gate of heaven and refused to enter.

What Luther says about a King's gift of a castle to a subject must be applied to absolution. In that act God really offers forgiveness to all, even to unbelievers and scorners of a gift which they think cannot be real because brought to them by a man like themselves. These deluded people do not consider that it is God Himself, not man, that does the forgiving. The minister may personally be a son of Belial, and yet he forgives people's sins when he pronounces absolution to them. Why? Because what he does is done in the name and by the command of God. Oftentimes kings have sent out wicked servants with orders to their subjects, and these commands were just as valid as if the king had published them in person.

Rightly, therefore, Luther urges this point regarding absolution: "It is God's command and word which the confessor speaks and the penitent hears. They are *both* in duty bound, as they love their souls, firmly and stoutly to believe this doctrine like any other article of faith." Indeed, also the minister, in the act of pronouncing absolution, is in duty bound to believe that all sins of his clients are forgiven. If he does not do this, he is a sacrilegious miscreant, who dares to open his mouth to pronounce absolution, while in his heart he regards the whole action as a burlesque designed to fool the stupid masses.

NINETEENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(February 20, 1885.)

One of the most important of the many doctrinal differences that were discussed during the first half of the eighteenth century between the so-called Pietists and the Orthodoxists was this: the Pietists — disciples, though not altogether faithful disciples, you know, of Spener, August Herman Francke, and John Jacob Rambach — held that any one unable to state the exact day and hour when he was converted and entered into grace was certainly not a true Christian and could be regarded as such neither by himself nor by others. The Orthodoxists denied this.

Now, it is, indeed, true that conversion does not require a day or an hour, but only a moment. For according to the Holy Scriptures it is nothing else than the quickening out of spiritual death unto spiritual life, or the turning out of the broad way leading netherward and into the narrow way leading upward, or the transfer from the kingdom of the devil to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Since there is no intermediary way between the small way leading upward and the broad way leading downward nor an intermediary kingdom between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of Christ, any person is either spiritually dead or spiritually alive, is traveling either on the narrow or on the broad way, and is either in the kingdom of Jesus Christ or in the kingdom of the devil. In other words, a person is either converted or not; there is no intermediary state.

True, Holy Scripture presents some instances of men who could actually name, to the day and hour, the time when they were converted to God and obtained grace. Let me cite a few of these. The first human beings, who fell on the first day of their existence, were also converted again on that same day. By hearing the promise of the Woman's Seed, that was to bruise the Serpent's head, they rose at once from their fall and obtained grace, righteousness, life, and salvation. Concerning David, who spent an entire year after his fall in carnal security, we know likewise that, when the prophet Nathan came to him to reprove him for his awful sin, he became terrified and confessed his sin. Immediately the prophet told him: "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." 2 Sam. 12, 13. In that moment David was converted, and he praised and magnified God, in the words of the Thirty-second Psalm, for the forgiveness of his sins. — Saul, the persecutor of Christians,

was vouchsafed great mercy when the Lord appeared to him in person. On hearing that terrible address: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" he collapsed and cried: "Who art Thou, Lord?" The Lord told him: "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." In that moment Saul lay crushed before the Lord and became a child of God, a "chosen vessel unto Him." For two or three days later he arose and, filled with the Spirit and with power, began to preach Christ Crucified. Acts 9. Concerning the three thousand who listened to the first Christian sermon on Pentecost, we hear that they were pricked in their hearts when the apostle charged them with the murder of Christ. But the moment they were told to believe in the Lord Jesus they received power from the Holy Spirit and believed. Lastly, we read of the conversion of the jailer at Philippi in the same night in which he had given two disciples of the Lord, Paul and Silas, the cruel treatment of putting their feet in the stocks in the inner prison; in the same night in which, during the earthquake, he was on the point of running his sword into his own heart, his question: "What must I do to be saved?" was answered by the apostle: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house," and he actually became a believer.

All these persons could say: "On that day and in that hour I was converted and brought out of death into life, out of darkness into light, from my forlorn condition under the wrath of God into the state of grace." But of many others we have no such record in the Scriptures. The history of the Church during the nineteen centuries of its existence shows that millions upon millions who were raised within the pale of the Church were unable to name the day and hour of their conversion, although they were well aware of the fact, and could prove, too, that they had become different men by being brought to a living faith in Christ by the Holy Spirit and by thus attaining to grace, righteousness, and the hope of everlasting life.

What may be the reason why the Pietists, who were really well-intentioned people, hit upon the doctrine that no one could be a Christian unless he had ascertained the exact day and hour of his conversion? The reason is that they imagined a person must suddenly experience a heavenly joy and hear an inner voice telling him that he had been received into grace and had become a child of God. Having conceived this notion of the mode and manner of conversion, they were forced to declare that a person must be able

to name the day and hour when he was converted, became a new creature, received forgiveness of sins, and was robed in the righteousness of Christ.

However, we have already come to understand in part what a great, dangerous, and fatal error this is. To-night we shall take up the last part of Thesis IX, which tells us in particular that the Word of God is not rightly divided "when sinners who have been struck down and terrified by the Law are directed . . . to their own prayers and wrestlings with God in order that they may win their way into a state of grace; in other words, when they are told to keep on praying and struggling *until they feel* that God has rereived them into grace."

This system has been adopted also by the Methodists. But before taking up the discussion of their view, we shall have to warn against a misunderstanding of the doctrine that a person must not base his salvation and his state of grace on his feeling. For this doctrine is abused by many.

There are people who regard themselves as good Christians although they are spiritually dead. They have never felt a real anguish on account of their sins; they have never been filled with terror on account of them, have never been appalled by the thought of the hell which they have deserved, have never been on their knees before God, bewailing with bitter tears their awful, damnable condition under sin. Much less have they wept sweet tears of joy and glorified God for His mercy. They read and hear the Word of God without being specially impressed by it. They go to church and receive absolution without feeling refreshed; they attend Holy Communion without any inward sensation and remain as cold as ice. Occasionally, when they become inwardly agitated because of their indifference in matters concerning their salvation and because of their lack of appreciation of God's Word, they try to quiet their heart with the reflection that the Lutheran Church teaches that the lack of spiritual feeling is of no moment. They reason that this lack cannot harm them and that they can be good Christians notwithstanding, because they consider themselves believers.

However, they labor under a grievous self-delusion. People in that condition have nothing but the dead faith of the intellect, a specious faith, or, to express it still more drastically, a lip faith. They may say with their mouths, "I believe," but their heart is not conscious of it. No, indeed; a person who cannot say, in accordance with Ps. 34, 8, that he has *tasted* and seen that the Lord is good must not regard himself as being in a state of true faith. More-

over, the Apostle Paul says, Rom. 8, 16: "The Spirit indeed beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Can the Holy Spirit bear this witness in us without our feeling it? The witness in court must speak loud enough for the judge to hear. The same is necessary in this case. According to God's Word any person who has never felt the testimony of the Spirit that he is the child of God is spiritually dead. He can offer no testimony in his favor and does wrong by considering himself a Christian nevertheless.

Again, the apostle says, Rom. 5, 1: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Objective peace, established through the shedding of Christ's blood, exists prior to our justification. Accordingly, the apostle must be speaking of a peace that is sensed, felt, and experienced.

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul writes, Rom. 14, 17: "The kingdom of God is . . . righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." The joy of which the apostle speaks is not worldly, or carnal, joy, but spiritual joy. A person that has tasted all the other joys except the last, is spiritually dead.

The examples of the saints recorded in the Bible corroborate this point. We behold them continually aglow with the praise of God because of what He has done for them. That presupposes that their hearts were conscious of the mercy which the Lord had shown them. Could David, without an inward experience, have exclaimed: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases"? He certainly had a very lively feeling of these matters when he spoke those words.

Lastly, ask any person who has all the criteria of a true, living Christian whether he has experienced all the things of which he speaks, and he will answer in the affirmative, telling you that, after experiencing the terror which God sends to a sinner whom He wants to rescue, he had an experience of the sweetness of God's grace in Christ. He will tell you that his heart is melting within him at every remembrance of his Savior's love. Again, he will also tell you that, spite of the fact that he knows he has obtained grace, he is frequently seized with fright and anguish at the sight of the Law.

Note, then, that our statement that no one must base his salvation and his state of grace on his feeling does not mean that he can be a good Christian without having experienced any feeling

in regard to religious matters. That is not what we teach. Let me offer a pertinent testimony of Luther, who differed, for instance, from Melanchthon by being anything rather than a sentimentalist, which Melanchthon was in the highest degree. Melanchthon based his joy on his feeling; but no matter what Luther's feelings were, he clung to the Word.

In his *Church Postil* (St. L. Ed. XII, 239 f.), commenting on the words: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4, 6), *Luther,* spite of the fact that he endeavored never to rely on changeable and delusive feelings, writes as follows: "At this point every one is to ascertain by self-examination whether he *feels* the Holy Spirit in his heart and *experiences* His speaking. [Mark you: the text says that the Spirit *cries,* "Abba, Father."] For St. Paul in this passage says that in every heart in which the Spirit dwells He cries, 'Abba, Father.' Likewise, in Rom. 8, 15 he says: 'Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' This crying is felt when one's conscience, without wavering and questioning, conceives a staunch boldness to be quite certain, not only that his sins have been forgiven, but also that he is a child of God, assured of his salvation, and may with a cheerful and assured heart and with all confidence call God his dear Father and cry to Him. Of these things he must be more certain than of his very life and must be ready to suffer every kind of death, and hell in addition, rather than allow this assurance to be taken from him by yielding to doubt.

"It would be an offense to the rich life of Christ and to His suffering if we were not to believe that the superabundance of all His merits has been acquired for us and if we were not to allow His great living and dying to incite us to, and confirm us in, this confidence with the same force as sin and afflictions are deterring us from it and make us despondent.

"True, there may come a strife in a Christian causing him an anxious feeling, leading him to think he is not a child of God, and to imagine and feel that God is an angry, stern judge, as happened to Job and many others. But in a conflict of this kind childlike confidence, though trembling and quaking, must conquer in the end, or everything is lost.

"Were Cain to hear this, he would cross himself with hands and feet and say with great humility: God keep me from this awful heresy and temerity! Am I, poor sinner, to be so conceited as to call myself a child of God? No, no; I shall humble myself,

acknowledge that I am a poor sinner, etc. People of this kind you must shun and beware of them as of the greatest enemies of the Christian faith and your salvation. We know, indeed, that we are poor sinners; but in this business we are not to consider what we are and what we do, but what Christ is, has done, and is still doing for us. We are not talking about our human nature, but about the mercy of God of which Ps. 103, 11 f. says: 'As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.' Do you consider it something great to be a child of God? Then do not consider it a trifling matter that the Son of God is come, made of a woman and placed under the Law, for the purpose of making you such a child of God. Everything that God does is great. That is the reason why it produces *great joy and courage* and intrepid spirits, who are not afraid of anything and able to do all things.

"Cain's attitude is narrow and produces nothing but despondent hearts, full of anguish, who are not fit either to suffer or to be active and get afraid at the sound of a shaking leaf, as Moses says, Lev. 26, 36. Cling, then, firmly to this text and know that *you must feel the crying of the Spirit in your heart;* for how can you fail to feel it when it is the crying of your own heart? Moreover, Paul uses the word 'crying' when he might have said: The Spirit lisps or speaks or sings. He wanted to use a far stronger term than these. He cries and calls with all might, from a full heart, so that everything seems full of life and energy through the confidence which He produces. To the same effect the apostle says in Rom. 8, 26: 'The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered'; and in v. 16: 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.' Is it possible that our heart should not feel this crying, groaning, and witness-bearing?

"And oh! a precious service is rendered the Christian by affliction and suffering, which incite him to such crying and rouse the Spirit in him. However, we never feel the Spirit and remain Cains because we are afraid of the cross and flee it. If you do not feel the crying of the Spirit, resolve never to quit praying till God hears you; for you are a Cain, and your spiritual condition is not what it should be.

"*But you must not desire to hear within you only this crying of the Spirit and nothing else.* There will be at the same time a murderous crying in your heart. That is to incite you to crying

and to exercise you therein. Such has been the experience of all other Christians. Also your sin will cry, causing abject despondency in your conscience. But the Spirit of Christ must drown these cries, that is, produce in you a stronger confidence than your despondency. For St. John says, First Epistle, chap. 3, 19—22: 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him.' This calling and crying of the Spirit within us, then, is nothing else than a strong, unwavering, trustful crying with our whole heart to God, as our dear Father, from us, as His dear children."

The misery of our times is caused by the fact that the faith of which Luther speaks is rare. Either men are spiritually dead and therefore are unconcerned about their soul's welfare, imagining that they will get to heaven anyway, or they are filled with anguish and uncertainty. Many who have spent their lives in their horrible "faith," which looks like faith, but is not, die with the thought in their hearts: What will become of me now? Am I going to heaven or not?

What Luther teaches in this citation is repudiated, as you know, by the Roman Church, which declares not only that man *can* not, but even that he *must* not, obtain assurance of his salvation. The Roman Church regards the striving for such assurance as a crime and a presumptuous undertaking and declares that only upon receiving a special, extraordinary revelation from heaven a person may say: "I know and am certain that I have been received into grace by God and shall be saved." That is an inverted gospel, and the entire teaching of the Papacy is nothing but a most pitiable perversion of the Gospel into a new law, and that, the Roman church laws.

People can be heard saying: "Oh, I know well enough that Christ has redeemed the whole world, but that does not answer the question whether *I* have been redeemed." Those who speak thus have no knowledge of either Law or Gospel. For a person who has learned to know the Gospel will say: "Since the Son of God has redeemed the whole world, He has redeemed me also. Since He has reedemed me, He wants me to believe that. He does not prevent me from believing it by the Pietistic warning: Do not believe prematurely!" We cannot believe too soon; the moment the Gospel is preached to us, we are to believe it, as we love our

souls, or we fall under the displeasure and wrath of God. But unless a person clings to the Word, he cannot feel assured; he will waver and vacillate every day and hour. This moment he will imagine himself a Christian, the next hour he will think that he has deluded himself.

Luther contends that the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of God's children is accompanied by strife. There must be confidence in Christians and at the same time fear and trembling. This is possible. I can cross an awful abyss, trembling at the thought that I may be hurled into it; but seeing a barrier erected on both sides of my path, I gather confidence and cross over, confident of safety. That is the strange paradox in the heart of a Christian: he fears and trembles and still is assured.

As to the witness of the Spirit, Paul does not say that it is being borne in a general way, but "with our spirit." Accordingly, our spirit must spiritually hear the witness of the Spirit, and that is the "feeling" of which we speak; it is the witness of the Spirit within us. It is strange that a Christian beginning to doubt will hear a voice telling him: "Christ has died for you spite of your sins. You need not become despondent nor yield to despair; you are numbered with the redeemed of the Lord, and your destination is heaven. Be of good cheer!" Coming spontaneously, this voice, which we cannot produce at pleasure, is the witness of the Holy Spirit. It comes to us especially at a time of spiritual tribulation. You do not need a witness every day, but when you are being accused, you go in search of one. The same happens in our spiritual life: when a poor Christian is in very great distress, the Holy Spirit calls to him, Do not despair.

Cain became a fugitive from God and a vagabond, who did not know his true relation to God. That is not the condition of a Christian. However, a Christian may be ever so sure of his state of grace, and nevertheless he will still hear the murderous roaring of the devil. Into his assurance of the grace of God there will come a voice whispering to him that he is not yet rid of his sins, for, behold, by what evil thoughts has he been visited this very day, what sinful lusts have arisen in him, what useless words have proceeded from his mouth; and was not the good that he has done mere sham? Those are the murderous arrows from Satan's bow. In such moments the Holy Spirit steps forward to bear testimony for us if we are Christians. —

We shall now pass on to the particular point in our thesis which is to engage our attention to-night, *viz.*, that Law and Gospel

are grievously commingled by those who assert that assurance of the forgiveness of sins requires praying, struggling, and wrestling until finally a joyful feeling arises in the heart, indicating to the person in a mysterious way that grace is now in his heart and that he can be of good cheer because he has forgiveness of his sins. Now, properly speaking, grace is never in man's, but in God's heart. *First* a person must *believe; after that he may feel.* Feeling proceeds from faith, not faith from feeling. If a person's faith proceeds from feeling, it is not genuine faith; for faith requires a divine promise which it lays hold of. Accordingly, we can be sure that the faith of those who can say: "I regard nothing in all the world except the precious Gospel; on that I build," is of the right sort. The devil may terrify and harass such people until they have no pleasant feeling of grace, but they will sing nevertheless: —

Though "No!" my heart should ever cry,
Still on Thy Word I shall rely,

or: —

I shall trust, though void of feeling,
Till before Thee I'll be kneeling.

The principal proof-text for this point of doctrine is 1 John 3, 19. 20: *Hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him. For* [Luther: *dass*] *if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things.* A Christian may feel the accusation of his own heart, that is, his conscience, and when trying to quiet his heart, he may hear a voice telling him that he is damned, that he has no forgiveness of his sins and no grace, is not a child of God and cannot hope for life eternal. To such a person the beloved apostle says: "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart." That is to say, our heart is indeed a judge, yet only a subordinate one. A higher Judge, namely, God, is above our heart. I can say to my troubled heart: "Be still, my heart! Keep silence, my conscience! I have appealed to a higher court and inquired of God, the supreme Judge, whether I am rid of my sins. From the higher court, which can always reverse the verdict of a lower court, I have obtained a verdict that my sins are forgiven, for I cling to the Word of God." A person who by the grace of God is enabled to believe this is a blessed person. Hell is closed, and heaven opened wide for him. Though all the devils in hell roar at him, "You are lost!" he can answer them: "It is not so; I am not lost, but redeemed forever. Here I have the written evidence in God's Word." And in due time the feeling of grace will return. In the very moment when

a Christian imagines that he is void of all feeling, cold, and dead, a miserable, lost creature, to whom the Word of God tastes like rotten wood, who does not relish absolution and has not the witness of the Holy Spirit in him, and all is over with him, — just in such a moment a great joy may suddenly enter his heart. God will not leave him in the slough of despair.

True, we cannot lay down rules for God. There is a great difference among Christians. Some have been highly favored in being led an easy way by God, always enjoying a beautiful, pleasant feeling and never being in need of strong wrestling. For persons who always find their experiences in harmony with the Word of God need not struggle for that harmony. Others, however, are nearly always led by God through darkness, great anguish, grievous doubts, and diverse afflictions. In the latter case we must be careful to distinguish between one who is dead and one who is afflicted. The distinction is not difficult. If I am worried about my lack of the feeling of grace for which I am earnestly longing, that is proof that I am a true Christian. For one who desires to believe *is* already a believer. For how could a person possibly desire to believe something which he regards untrue? No man desires to be deceived. As soon as I want to believe something, I am secretly believing it. This is a point for pastors to note when they are dealing with individual souls. Good congregation-members may come to the pastor complaining of great spiritual misery, claiming they cannot believe at all. If, upon being asked whether they would like to believe, they eagerly answer in the affirmative, they are to be comforted with the assurance that they may confidently consider themselves believers, and they should be told to wait until God permits the hour of their affliction to pass, when they will presently observe their faith breaking forth in great strength and joy.

John 20, 29 we read: *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.* Thomas refused to believe that Christ had risen from the dead unless he would be able to put his finger into the nail-prints in Christ's body. Out of great compassion, Christ granted him that privilege, and Thomas fell down before Him, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!" Thereupon the Lord addressed the words just quoted to him. Now, seeing is practically nothing else than feeling. For whether I receive a sensation through my nervous system or see something with my nerve of vision or hear something with my auditory nerve, cause and effect

in each case are identical. The Lord's remarks to Thomas mean that we must *first* believe and *then* see and must not desire first to see and then to believe. It is certain, then, that we must not desire first to *feel*, but we must rather believe and then wait until God grants us the sweet sensation that our sins have been taken from us.

Heb. 11, 1 states: *Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* We have here a definition of faith. If faith is what is here stated: a firm, reliant confidence, not doubting, not wavering, it is self-evident that faith dare not be based on sight, feeling, and sense. If it is, it is built on sand, and the entire structure thus set up will soon collapse. Pity the person who has become accustomed to regarding himself as pardoned while he has pleasant feelings. As a rule, these pleasant feelings vanish in the hour of death, when the final agony drives them away. Happy the man who in that hour can say: —

I cling to what my Savior taught
And trust it whether felt or not.

He can depart in peace. Pity the poor, unhappy wretch who in that hour discovers that he is void of any feeling of grace and must die without Jesus dwelling in his heart. Many who have joined the fanatical sects may have perished because they let go of Jesus in their dying hour, thinking that they were not permitted to apprehend Him. For all fanatics hold that the privilege of coming to Jesus and taking comfort in Him is not conveyed to them except by their feeling of divine grace. When they ask a brother of their communion, "How do you feel?" and he tells them that he is not aware of any feeling, they begin milling with the poor wretch in prayer, struggling and wrestling until he gets the desired feeling. The feeling that he gets, however, is merely physical, not the feeling of the Holy Spirit. For human nature, when put under an extraordinary strain, is apt to turn a person's mind. Suddenly all nerves seem to have snapped, and he has the sensation of a drowning person who is rescued from the watery grave; such a person, too, has a sensation of delight, but it is not the delightful sensation of the Holy Spirit.

In his *Church Postil* (St. L. Ed. XI, 1577 f.), *Luther* writes: "Another quality of faith is that it waives previous knowledge and assurance of its worthiness to receive the grace of God and to be heard by Him. That is what doubters do who reach out after God and try Him. They are groping after God similarly to a blind man groping along a wall; they first of all want to feel and be

certified that He cannot escape them. The Epistle to the Hebrews, in chap. 11, says: Faith is a sure confidence in things hoped for, not judging things by what they appear to be. That means, faith clings to things that it does not see, feel, or apprehend by means of the senses. It is rather a trusting reliance on God, on whom it is willing to risk and stake anything, not doubting that it will come out winner. The outcome really certifies the correctness of such trust, *and the feeling and sensation will come to him unsought and undesired in and by his relying upon it and believing it.*"

Luther here gives an exact description of the true quality of faith: it declines to know and to be assured before it will give credence, but it gives credence the moment God's Word is spoken. This is indeed followed by assurance, sooner in one person, later in another. The common experience is that a person who has become a Christian at once perceives a pleasant sensation. God treats His young children as an earthly father treats his. He feeds them light food, gives them sweets, etc. So God gives to Christians in their initial stage the sugar-bread of pleasant feelings. But when they have passed through a number of spiritual experiences which exercised their faith, the sugar-bread stops, and they are given black rye-bread, which sometimes is quite hard and tastes stale. God calculates that after sufficient experience has been gained in Christianity by these Christians, the new food will not be too severe a trial for them, while it would be indigestible to such as are still children in faith. When trials come, many Christians indulge in reminiscences of their former happiness, how they relished the sweet experience and joyful assurance that God in heaven was gracious to them, something of which they had no inkling prior to their conversion; how they retired at night, knowing that they would rest in the arms of Jesus, and rose cheerfully in the morning, knowing that Jesus and His angels would accompany them in all their ways; how sure they were that no misfortune would befall them, or if any should befall them, that it would be a blessing in disguise, as Paul Gerhardt views it, when he sings: —

My heart from care is free,
Misfortune now is play,
No troubles trouble me,
And night is bright as day.

They may long for the food of those former days, but they feel that they can digest the hard rye-bread that is offered them now.

If God were to withdraw His consolations from beginners in Christianity, they would say: "We decline leading such a miserable

life. The ministers in their sermons always picture the Christian life as a glorious state. But now we see that a Christian is a most unhappy person; his whole life is filled with anguish, misery, and terrors."

What a kind Father, then, is God to His Christians! He does not lay heavy burdens on them at the start. He gets them accustomed to His dealings gradually. Then He withdraws comforts from them in order that they may learn to lay hold of Him also in the dark. Accordingly, we must not think that we have fallen from grace or have forsaken our first love when we no longer have the blessed experiences of former days, or at least not in the same degree. The love which an aged, experienced Christian bears towards his Savior may not have the sweet flavor of his earlier life, but it is purer, because many dregs which it contained at the beginning have been purged from it.

Luther continues: "Tell me, who had given these lepers the duly sealed and stamped letter assuring them that Christ would hear their prayer? Do you observe in them any sensation, any feeling of His mercy, any information, knowledge, or certainty of His goodness? None of these items can be discerned in them. Well, what do we see in them? A frank risking and cheerful daring that relies on His unsensed, untried, and unrecognized goodness. They behold no marks indicating what He intends to do for them; they look solely to His goodness, and that incites them to the daring thought that He will not leave them in the lurch. Whence did they have their knowledge of His goodness? For although they had never made any trial of it through some experience, they had to have some previous knowledge of it. No doubt, they had gathered it from public rumors about all the good that He had done, though personally they had never had any experience of His goodness. For the goodness of God must be proclaimed through His Word, and men must rely on it before they have made a test of it or experienced it."

When I have recited the Lord's Prayer with proper devotion, — something, by the way, that happens very rarely, — I can cheerfully conclude by saying "Amen," though I may not have felt while praying that it is really the Holy Spirit that is urging me to pray. I have had to struggle while praying, and my prayer is heard nevertheless.

In another place *Luther* writes (St. L. Ed. XI, 453 f.): "What I have said is this: God will not permit us *to rely on anything or to cling with our hearts to anything that is not Christ as revealed in*

His Word, no matter how holy and full of the Spirit it may seem.. Faith has no other ground on which to take its stand. Accordingly, the mother of Christ and Joseph meet with the experience that their own wisdom, calculations, and hopes fail them and turn out to be futile while they are hurrying from place to place seeking Him. For they are not seeking Him where they should, but consult their flesh and blood, which is always staring about after some comfort other than that offered by God's Word and always desires something visible and tangible, which can be grasped by the senses and human reason. For that reason God lets them go down to failure and forces this lesson upon them, that no comfort, aid, and advice which men seek from flesh and blood, from other men or any creature whatsoever, is worth anything unless God's Word is grasped. They had to abandon everything: their friends, acquaintances, the entire city of Jerusalem, every ingenious device, all that they themselves and other men could do. All these things did not provide them with the proper assurance, until they sought Him in the Temple, where He was about His Father's business. There Christ is surely found, and there the heart recovers its cheer, while it would otherwise remain cheerless, since comfort can be provided for us neither by ourselves nor by any other creature.

"Hence, when God sends us such grievous afflictions, we, too, must learn not to follow our own calculations or the advice of such men as send us hither and thither and direct us to our own or other people's resources. On the contrary, we should remember that we must seek Christ in His Father's house and business: we must simply cling to the Word of the Gospel alone, which shows us Christ aright and teaches us to know Him. Learn, then, from this and any other spiritual affliction that, whenever you wish to convey genuine comfort to others or to yourself, you must say with Christ: What does it mean that you are running hither and thither, that you torment yourselves with anxious and sad thoughts, imagining that God will not keep you in His grace and that there is no longer any Christ for you? Why do you refuse to be satisfied unless you find Him in yourselves and have the feeling of being holy and without sin? You will never succeed; all your toil will be labor lost. Do you not know that Christ will be nowhere nor permit Himself to be found anywhere except in that which is His Father's, not in anything that is your or other people's? There is no fault in Christ or His mercy; He is never lost and can always be found. But the fault is in you, because you are not seeking Him where you ought to, namely, in the place where He is to be sought. You

are being guided by your feeling and think you can apprehend Him with your thoughts. You must come to the place where there is neither your own nor any man's business, but God's business and government, namely, to His Word. There you will find Him and hear and see that there is no wrath and disfavor against you in Him, as you fear in your despondency, but nothing else than grace and cordial love towards you, and that He is acting as your kind and loving Mediator with the Father, speaking the kindest and best words possible in your behalf. Nor does He send you trials with the intention of casting you off, but in order that you may learn to know Him better and cling more firmly to His Word and in order to rebuke your unreasonableness, thus forcing you to learn by experience how cordially and faithfully He cherishes you."

Here you hear a verdict condemning all fanatical sects. No matter what other false doctrines they may teach, they all have this grievous error in common, that they do not rely solely on Christ and His Word, but chiefly on something that takes place in themselves. As a rule, they imagine that all is well with them because they have turned from their former ways. As if that were a guarantee of reaching heaven! No; we are not to look back to our conversion for assurance, but we must go to our Savior again and again, every day, as though we never had been converted. My former conversion will be of no benefit to me if I become secure. I must return to the mercy-seat every day, otherwise I shall make my former conversion my savior, by relying on it. That would be awful; for in the last analysis it would mean that I make myself my savior.

TWENTIETH EVENING LECTURE.

(February 27, 1885.)

My Friends: —

When a place has been assigned to a Lutheran candidate of theology where he is to discharge the office of a Lutheran minister, that place ought to be to him the dearest, most beautiful, and most precious spot on earth. He should be unwilling to exchange it for a kingdom. Whether it is in a metropolis or in a small town, on a bleak prairie or in a clearing in the forest, in a flourishing settlement or in a desert, to him it should be a miniature paradise. Do not the blessed angels descend from heaven with great joy whenever the Father in heaven sends them to minister to those who are to be heirs of salvation? Why, then, should *we* poor sinners

be unwilling to hurry after them with great joy to any place where we can lead other men, our fellow-sinners, to salvation?

However, though great be the joy of a young, newly called pastor on entering his parish, there should be in him an equally great earnestness and determination to do all he can to save every soul entrusted to him. Frequently it may seem to him that the majority, if not all members, of his congregation are still blind, dead, unconverted people. That observation must not make him morose or discourage him, but rather fill him with an ardent desire to rouse them out of spiritual death through the divine means of grace and make them living Christians. Spite of the devil he should take up his work in the power of faith. If he observes that some members of his new charge are even living in manifest shame and vice, he must not despair, but bear in mind that he has a powerful Word by which he can make an effort to liberate these slaves of sin. If he observes that his congregation is on a low level as regards the knowledge of salvation, that his people are still sadly ignorant of what the Gospel really is, he must cheerfully resolve to take up the task of instructing the poor, ignorant people with patience and zeal, until they will see the light. Or he may notice that there are people in his congregation who are sincere, but disposed by their Pietistic schooling to be legalistic, who, therefore, regard some things as sinful that are not sinful. In that case he must resolve to forego exercising his Christian liberty lest he offend souls that regard as sin something that he feels free to do. On the other hand, he may discover in his congregation members of an Antinomian tendency, who are inclined to go too far in the exercise of their Christian liberty, because they are not accustomed to have the Law preached to them in its severity. In such a case he must not decide forthwith to oppose them with all his force and preach nothing but the sternest Law to them for a whole year. No, he must go after them gently and gradually make them see the stern demands of the Law. For the Apostle Paul says concerning himself: "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some." 1 Cor. 9, 22. This statement he wants every servant of Christ to take to heart. Its import is that a minister must not be satisfied with merely proclaiming the truth; he must proclaim the truth so as to meet the needs of his people. He may have to defer saying many things until his people have gained confidence in him and his teaching and he knows that he may frankly tell them anything without fear of repelling them. Briefly, he must

resolve to turn his congregation from a dreary desert into a flourishing garden of God.

Again, he may make the very cheering discovery that most of the members of his congregation are old, tried, believing, and active Christians and that there are only a few who make the impression of being unconverted. In that case he must resolve, before anything else, to bring the unconverted to Christ. Of course, he must make up his mind also in due time to give to those well-grounded in the truth the strong meat which they need.

A pitiful object is the young minister who enters upon his office with the thought that his days of hard labor and toil are over, that he has now entered a haven of rest and peace, which he decides to enjoy, since now he is his own boss and need not take orders from any person in the world. Equally as pitiable as the attitude to the sacred office which I have just sketched is that of the minister who looks upon his office as his craft, or trade, and resolves to prepare for himself a nice, comfortable parish by being careful not to make enemies and doing everything to make all his people his friends. These unhappy individuals plan to employ spiritual assets for temporal profit. They are not true ministers of Christ, and on the Last Day He will say to them: "I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." Matt. 7, 23.

But blessed is the minister who starts his official work on the very first day with the determination to do everything that the grace of God will enable him to do in order that not a soul in his congregation shall be lost by his fault. Such a one resolves that by the grace of God he will do all he can, so that, when the day comes for him to put down his shepherd's staff, he may be able to say, as Christ said to His Father: Here I am and those that Thou gavest me, and none of them is lost. Even the blood of those who shall stand on the left side of the judgment-seat, he resolves, shall not be on his hands.

But now the question arises: What is the matter of chief concern to a minister who wants to attain this glorious object? He must approach the Lord with heartfelt prayer and earnest entreaties in behalf of his congregation and, when preaching the Word of God with great zeal publicly and privately, jointly or severally, rightly divide the Word of Truth. For that is what Paul demands 2 Tim. 2, 15, saying: "Study to show thyself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth."

During your present year at the Seminary this very thing, you know, is the subject of our study — the proper division of the Word of God, of Law and the Gospel. These two are the cardinal doctrines of all the Holy Scriptures, which are made up of these two. Any passage of Scripture, yea, any historical fact recorded in Scripture can be classified as belonging either to the Law or to the Gospel. No one should be permitted to graduate from a school of theology who is unable to determine whether a given passage of Scripture is Law or Gospel, or whether in any compound clause of Scripture the protasis is Law and the apodosis Gospel, or *vice versa*. It is your duty to become perfectly clear on this subject.

Many things might still be said in discussion of the ninth thesis, but we must not tarry at this thesis any longer if we wish to finish the series.

Thesis X.

In the sixth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the preacher describes faith in a manner as if the mere inert acceptance of truths, even while a person is living in mortal sins, renders that person righteous in the sight of God and saves him; or as if faith makes a person righteous and saves him for the reason that it produces in him love and reformation of his mode of living.

This evening we shall consider the first part of this thesis, which refers to a mingling of Law and Gospel that occurs chiefly in the Roman Church and which is the principal reason why that Church declines Luther and his doctrine. Luther, you know, taught that good works do not save a person, but only faith, without good works. From this rejection of good work, papists draw the inference that Luther must have been a wicked man because he taught that to get to heaven, man should only believe and need not do any good works. However, that is by no means Luther's doctrine. Luther taught the exact contrary. True, he did not say that, to be saved, a person must have faith and, in addition to that, good works, or love; but he did teach that those who would be saved must have a faith *that produces love spontaneously and is fruitful in good works*. That does not mean that faith saves on account of love which springs from it, but that the faith which the Holy Spirit creates and which cannot but do good works justifies because it clings to the gracious promises of Christ and because it lays hold of Christ. It is active in good works because it is genuine faith. The believer need not at all be exhorted to do good works; his faith does them automatically. The believer engages in good works, not

from a sense of duty, in return for the forgiveness of his sins, but chiefly because he cannot help doing them. It is altogether impossible that genuine faith should not break forth from the believer's heart in works of love. But this is a matter of which papists have no inkling. They imagine a person may have true faith and yet live in mortal sin. Therefore they sneer at the teaching that faith saves and call it a "fine religion," meaning that it is the worst and most wicked religion that has ever been invented.

However, it never entered Luther's mind to teach a faith that believes what the Church believes, as the papists do. For they connect with the notion of faith the idea that it is a conviction that the teaching of their Church is right. Hence in their view any one who has that conviction has the true faith, although they add that such a person does not immediately enter heaven at his death. Among their members, people may be fornicators, adulterers, drunkards, thieves, and yet be good Christians.

Gal. 5, 6 we read: *In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.* The inefficiency of a faith that fails to work by love is not due to a lack of love, but to the fact that it is not real, honest faith. Love must not be added to faith but grow out of it. A fruitful tree does not produce fruit by somebody's order, but because, while there is vitality in it and it is not dried up, it must produce fruit spontaneously. Faith is such a tree; it proves its vitality by bearing fruit. It is withered when it fails to bring forth fruit. The sun, likewise, need not be told to shine, it will continue shining till Judgment Day without any one's issuing orders to do it. Faith is such a sun.

Acts 15, 9 records an effect of the mission-work of the early Church thus: *God put no difference between us* [the Jews] *and them* [the Gentiles], *purifying their hearts by faith.* A person who claims to have a firm faith which he will never abandon, but who still has an impure heart, must be told that he is in great darkness; for he has no faith at all. You may regard all the doctrines that are preached in the Lutheran Church as true, but if your heart is still in its old condition, filled with the love of sin, if you still act contrary to your conscience, your whole faith is mere sham. Yours is not the faith of which the Holy Spirit speaks when He uses the word "faith" in the Scriptures; for that faith — the genuine article — purifies the heart.

Christ says, John 5, 44: *How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that cometh from*

God only? An awful verdict is pronounced in these words by the Savior on those who seek honor from men: they have no faith. It is one of the fruits of faith that from the moment it begins to grow up in the heart it gives all honor to God alone. When the believer does receive honors from men, he is inwardly convinced that he has not merited them and says to God: —

> Whate'er of good this life of mine
> Has shown, is altogether Thine,

thus returning to God any honor bestowed upon him. A person without faith, on finding himself lowered or despised, at once becomes depressed and morose because he is not getting what he seeks. There are preachers of this sort who enter their pulpit under the dominant influence of an ambitious passion and feel tickled when people who may be altogether unqualified to appraise them admire the wonderful delivery of such a young preacher and predict a great future for him. He likes that better than when one slips him a ten-dollar bill, although he will accept that too. But jesting aside! We are all haughty, proud, and ambitious, and this noxious vice can be driven from our hearts only by the Holy Ghost. But we never become rid of it entirely; an evil root remains in the heart. A believer, when noticing this thing in himself, abominates it, reprobates himself, feels ashamed of himself, and asks God to deliver him from these abominable notions of pride.

The truth of this statement is beyond question; for the Savior's words are in the form of a rhetorical question and signify: You cannot believe; for these two, seeking honor of men and believing, are simply incompatible. The entrance of faith into the heart has the effect of making the believer humble in the presence of God and men. Lest we despair when listening in occasionally on our own heart, we must not forget that a poison-root of vanity remains in our heart; but as soon as it begins to stir up vain thoughts in us, we must fight it. A person who does not fight his vanity has no faith and is not a Christian.

We read in 1 John 5, 4: *Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* Accordingly, a person in his old nature and not born of God, a person who still loves the world and seeks his heart's satisfaction in its folly and vanity, has no faith; for faith overcomes the world.

Jas. 2, 1 the apostle says: *My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory,* WITH RESPECT OF PERSONS. Preferring the rich, because of their wealth, to the poor means

respecting people's person, and that is something which faith will not tolerate. The tendency to do this leaves the heart with the entrance of faith; for the believer views every one, not as far as his personality is concerned, but in his relation to God. To him a poor beggar, having been redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, is worth as much as a king or an emperor.

Such are the miracles which faith works in our hearts.

Now, to represent justifying and saving faith as the inert mental act of regarding certain matters as true, which can coexist with mortal sin, means to treat faith as a work which man can produce in himself and preserve in himself even while sinning. True faith is a treasure which only the Holy Spirit can bestow.

The Council of Trent, you know, was convened a few months before Luther's death for the purpose of healing the wounds which the Reformation had dealt the Papacy. The Council put its seal on all errors which in the course of time had been adopted by the Roman Church, but presented them in a subtler manner than had been done by most of the theologians of that age. The Roman theologian Smets reproduces the following decree which the *Council of Trent* passed in its sixth session: "In defense of the divine Law, which excommunicates not only unbelievers, but also believers, namely, such as are fornicators, adulterers, pederasts, drunkards, robbers, and all who commit mortal sin, it must be firmly maintained that the Gospel, grace, righteousness, and the forgiveness of sin may be lost, not only by unbelief, by which faith itself is lost, but also by any other *mortal sin, although faith is not lost by such sin.*" The Council admits that a person who turns unbeliever loses faith. An egregious truth, indeed! It is inserted for the purpose of blinding and misleading men. It teaches that salvation may be forfeited while faith is not lost; which is quite correct when applied to the religion of *papists;* for the most depraved Catholic can be the best member of the Catholic Church. According to the religion of Rome there can be believing thieves, believing fornicators, believing adulterers and pederasts, believing misers, drunkards, blasphemers, and robbers. Observe that these unfortunate people have no conception of what faith is. If they had an inkling of it, they would see that wicked men cannot truly believe, cannot have a genuine faith. At the same time they would see that the Lutheran Church does not believe what they think it believes. Far from placing good works in the background, the doctrine of the Lutheran Church points to the true source from which good works must spring. For a person who by the Holy Spirit and the grace

of God has obtained a living confidence in Christ cannot abide in sin. His faith changes and purifies his heart.

It is scarcely believable that from another angle the Calvinists have fallen into the same error. We read in the *Decrees of the Synod of Dort*, chap. V, 3—8: "Because of the remnants of sin dwelling in them, moreover, because of the temptations of the world and Satan, the converted cannot abide in grace when left to their own natural resources. But God is faithful and mercifully confirms them in the grace bestowed on them and keeps them in the same until the end. However, although the power of God which confirms and keeps true believers in grace is too great to be overcome by their flesh, nevertheless the converted are not always urged and moved by God in such a manner that in certain, particular acts they do not depart from the guidance of grace nor are seduced by the lusts of the flesh to obey them. For this reason they must continually watch and pray lest they be led into temptation. If they fail to do this, they *may not only by the flesh, the world, and Satan be hurried into grievous and awful sins,* but occasionally they *are* hurried into such sins by a just permissive providence of God. Instances of this kind are the *deplorable fall of David, Peter, and other saints,* which are recorded in Scripture. However, by such heinous sins they greatly offend against God, incur mortal guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt *the exercise of faith* [mark: only the exercise of faith, not faith itself], grossly violate their conscience, and occasionally lose the *consciousness* of their faith for a season; until they return to the right way by earnest repentance and God again makes His fatherly countenance to shine upon them. For because of His unalterable decree of predestination, God, who is rich in mercy, *does not entirely take His Holy Spirit away from His own in such deplorable instances, nor does He permit them to lapse to a point where they would fall from the grace of the adoption to sonship and from the state of being justified. . . .* For, in the first place, He preserves in them that imperishable seed of His out of which they were born again, so that it cannot be lost or driven out from them. Furthermore, He renews them certainly and effectually unto repentance by the Word and His Spirit, in order that in conformity with God they may heartily grieve over the sins they committed (by His permission), may with contrite heart pray for, and obtain by their faith, forgiveness in the blood of the Mediator, recover the feeling of the grace of God reconciled with them, worship His mercy by faith, and thereafter manifest greater zeal in working out their salvation with fear and trembling.

Thus they obtain, not by their own merit and strength, but through the gracious compassion of God, this boon, that they do *not entirely fall from faith and grace nor remain in their fall till the end and be lost.*"

The first proof cited for this view is taken from 1 John 3, 9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God." This does not mean that the converted cannot lose the seed. It means that, while the seed is in them, it has this effect that it keeps them from living in mortal sin.

The Calvinists, then, claim that, when David became an adulterer and even committed murder, he did not lose either his faith or the grace of God, but his faith merely withdrew somewhat, so that he could not exercise it. That was all. He did not fall from grace or lose his faith, they claim, so that he would have gone to perdition if he had died in that condition.

This is an awful doctrine. Men who believe it will not worry about repenting when they have committed such crimes as adultery and murder. When Cromwell, the miscreant, who sentenced his liege, the king, to death and instituted murderous and bloody trials throughout England, was at the point of death, he became alarmed. Summoning his chaplain, he asked him whether a person who had once been a believer could lose his faith, which the miserable chaplain negatived. Cromwell thereupon concluded that all was well with him, because he knew that once upon a time he had been a believer. Remembering the profound impressions which the Word of God had made upon him at certain times in his life, he relied on the abominable comfort which his chaplain offered him, *viz.*, that, since he had had faith once, he still had it. This instance shows the awful effect of this doctrine of the Calvinists.

Let me now present a testimony from our own Confessions, namely, from the *Smalcald Articles*, Part III, Art. III, §§ 42—45 (Mueller, p. 324; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 491): "On the other hand, if certain sectarists would arise, some of whom are perhaps already extant and in the time of the insurrection [of the peasants] came to my own view, holding that those who had once received the Spirit or the forgiveness of sins or had become believers, even though they should afterwards sin, would still remain in the faith and such sin would not harm them, and [hence] crying thus: 'Do whatever you please; if you believe, it all amounts to nothing; faith blots out all sins,' etc., — they say, besides, that if any one sins after he has received faith and the Spirit, he never truly had

the Spirit and faith: I have had before me many such insane men, and I fear that in some such a devil is still lurking. [Mark Luther says this view issues from the devil.]

"It is, accordingly, necessary to know and to teach that, when holy men, still having and feeling original sin, also daily repenting of and striving with it, happen to fall into manifest sins [that is, sins which do not remain hidden in the heart], as David into adultery, murder and blasphemy, that then faith and the Holy Ghost has departed from them [they cast out faith and the Holy Ghost]. For the Holy Ghost does not permit sin to have dominion, to gain the upper hand, so as to be accomplished, but represses and restrains it, so that it must not do what it wishes. But if it does what it wishes, the Holy Ghost and faith are certainly not present. For St. John says, 1 Ep. 3, 9: 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, . . . and he cannot sin.' And yet it is also the truth when the same St. John says, 1 Ep. 1, 8: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'"

David had ceased to be a prophet enlightened by the Holy Spirit and a child of God when he fell into sin. Had he died in those days, he would have gone to perdition. Yea, that could have happened to him during the entire year before Nathan came to preach repentance to him; for David had pronounced the man who had committed the crime narrated by Nathan a doomed man, when Nathan told him, "Thou art the man," and showed him that he had uttered his own sentence: if he did not turn from his iniquity, he would go to hell and be damned.

The light of faith can be extinguished not only by gross sins, but by any wilful, intentional sin. Accordingly, defection from faith occurs far oftener than we imagine. Faith ceases not only in those who lead a life of shame, but also in such as permit themselves to be led astray against their better knowledge and the warning of their conscience. They plan to do a certain thing and carry out their purpose, although they know that it is contrary to God's Word. In such instances faith becomes extinct; however, the person caught in this snare promptly recovers his faith if he promptly arrests himself in his wrong-doing, as the instance of Peter shows. Peter did not harden himself. When the glance of Jesus met his eyes, he went out and wept bitterly. That glance made him repent of his sin, causing him to realize the enormity of his offense and the unspeakable greatness of his Lord's mercy. It seemed to say, "Poor Peter, repent!" and pierced his heart like

a dagger. Happy the man who, after falling, rises at once, immediately, and does not delay his repentance, lest he arrive at a stage where his heart is hardened.

In conclusion I shall submit a testimony from Luther's writings. In 1536 a certain minister sent a commentary which he had written on the First Epistle of John to the faculty at Wittenberg with the request that it be examined as to its fitness for publication. The commentary contained the error that the elect do not lose the Holy Spirit even when they lapse into conscious sinning and gross vices. Luther declared himself opposed to the publication of the commentary and wrote a theological opinion on the point under review, which was signed by the other members of the faculty. It is found in his works, St. L. Ed. X, 1706 ff. *Luther* says: "When a person sins against his conscience, that is, when he knowingly and intentionally acts contrary to God, as, for instance, an adulterer or any other criminal, who knowingly does wrong, he is, while consciously persisting in his intention, without repentance and faith and does not please God. For example, while a person keeps the wife of another man, it is manifest that he is void of repentance, faith, and holiness. For the faith by which we are made righteous must be associated with a good conscience. It is absolutely impossible for these two things to coexist in a person, *viz.*, faith that trusts in God and a wicked purpose, or, as it is also called, an evil conscience. Faith and the worship of God are delicate affairs; a very slight wound inflicted on the conscience may drive out faith and prayer. Every tried Christian frequently is put through this experience.

"Accordingly, Paul joins two requisites of a Christian in 1 Tim. 1, 5, saying: 'Now, the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned'; again, in v. 19: 'Holding faith and a good conscience'; again, chap. 3, 9: 'Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience,' etc. These and kindred passages, to be cited anon, serve notice that where there is not a good conscience, there is no faith and no holiness.

"Therefore, while only faith in our Savior Jesus Christ obtains the grace of justification, *i. e.*, while he who believes has forgiveness of his sins and is accepted with God, still he must drop his former evil intentions, so that there is in him the beginning of a good conscience. Now, where there is faith and a good conscience, there certainly is the Holy Spirit; and yet the justified do not rest their confidence on their own worthiness or good conscience, but on

Christ. Hence we conclude from Christ's promise that we have been received into grace for His sake and may offer our prayers to God acceptably, as John says, 1 Ep. 3, 20 ff.: 'If our heart condemn us, . . . we have confidence toward God, and whatsoever we ask we receive of Him.' Although there remains in the saints sin, inborn depravity, evil propensities; although they do not with full earnestness fear God and trust in Him, — which are indeed great sins and must not be regarded as trifling defects, — still these weaknesses are to be distinguished and placed far away from conscious and intentional sinning and wicked purposes, which make the conscience unclean. These latter sins do not coexist with holiness. In this connection we must not discuss predestination, but the wrath of God which is revealed in His Word, and then seek grace after our fall.

"The sins into which the elect fall take away their holiness and drive the Holy Spirit from them. This is quite evident, first, in Adam and Eve, who were elect, but miserably lost their holiness and the Holy Spirit nevertheless, so that by the discomfiture of these first men all their descendants have become feeble and sinful by nature. Had they not been raised up again, they would have remained damned forever. In the mean time they were verily under the wrath of God. These happenings are not sham events; for in clear terms St. Paul says, Rom. 5, 12: 'By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin.' Death plainly signifies damnation, and what that is everybody knows. Likewise, when David had slept with the wife of Uriah and had caused her godly husband to be slain, etc., he was under the wrath of God and had lost his holiness and the Holy Spirit until he was converted again. Many similar instances might be rehearsed.

"The truth of what I have stated is clearly established from the following passages: 1 John 3, 7 f.: 'Let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil.' For instance, when David permitted his heart to be set on fire with the flames of inordinate desire and lost his stability, he was urged on by the devil, who, after conquering him through the first sin, drove him to still greater sins, murder, etc. That the Holy Spirit had been driven out of David's heart is evident from the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 6, 9 f.: 'Adulterers shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' He is speaking of adultery that is still continuing; while an adulterer persists in his purpose, he is not an heir of the kingdom of Christ. Consequently, he is not righteous and holy, nor has he the Holy Spirit.

'Because of these things,' says Paul in Eph. 5, 6, 'cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience.' In Rom. 8, 13 Paul introduces a distinction that must be made among sins; he says: 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' Now, it is manifest that Paul in this passage preaches for saints and teaches them how they may remain holy, namely, by resisting their evil inclinations. On the other hand, he says: 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die'; that is, If you yield to your evil inclinations, you are again under the wrath of God; for that is what he means by dying. In Ezek. 33, 13 ff. we read, in effect: Whenever the righteous does evil, his righteousness shall not be remembered; and whenever the wicked turns and does good, his sins shall be forgotten. This is a clear text; it proves that the righteous, when falling into sin knowingly and intentionally, is no longer righteous. In Rev. 2, 14 the Holy Spirit reproves the church at Pergamos for tolerating false doctrine and fornication, of which things He says: 'I hate them.' Now, when God is angry with some one, that person is not holy and accepted with Him, etc. And among those who were rebuked at Pergamos there were, without doubt, elect and non-elect.

"On the ground of these and many other testimonies the Church has always taught with unanimity that, when a saint knowingly and purposely acts contrary to God's command, he is no longer a saint, but has lost the true faith and cast away the Holy Spirit. But if he turns again, God will keep the gracious oath which He has sworn, saying: 'As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.' Accordingly, for Christ's sake God takes those people who turn to Him back into His grace and rekindles in their hearts the true faith through the Gospel and His Holy Spirit. He has not commanded us to inquire first whether we have been predestinated, but it is sufficient for us to know that whosoever perseveres unto the end in repentance and faith is certainly elect and will be saved, as Christ says: 'He that persevereth unto the end, the same shall be saved.' "

How dare a person come before God with an evil conscience and praise Him in fulsome strains for the forgiveness of his sins? God will reject him together with his prayer. Such a person cares not for God, because he purposes to continue in his sin; how, then, can he engage in intimate converse with God? It is impossible. Suppose some one were to come to you and acknowledge

that he has treated you shamefully. But he wants to continue treating you that way; and yet he desires that you forgive him. Would you do it? Of course not. We would consider a person insane who would talk like this: "I want to be forgiven, but I want to continue doing for what I am asking forgiveness. As often as I meet you, I shall insult you; but I want you to forgive me." Now, that is just the way God is treated by men who want to take comfort in His mercy while continuing in sin.

Luther speaks of the impossibility of joining faith with an evil conscience. Conscience is a damaging witness, which makes us shut our mouth when we start to explain any intentional wrong-doing. We are all indeed poor sinners; but when we undertake to sin purposely, our conscience warns us that we are enemies of God and intend to remain such. It tells us when we start to call upon God that we do not mean to come to God at all. Faith is, in this respect, a very tender thing, which is easily wounded.

It is not the manifest enormity of their sin that casts such people out of their state of grace and puts out the heavenly light of their faith, but the attitude of their heart towards their sin. When I am suddenly overtaken by sin, God forgives me; He is not angry with me and does not charge that sin against me. Such acts do not extinguish faith. Or it may be that I am rushed into sin by my temperament. I do not want to sin, but I have been irritated to such an extent that, before I know it, I have sinned. That is not a mortal sin, which would take me out of the state of grace. But when a person persists in his sin against his conscience, though he knows it to be a sin, and continues sinning purposely for a long time, he no longer has faith and cannot truly pray to God; the Holy Spirit leaves his heart, for another spirit, the evil spirit, rules in it, whom the sinner has admitted into his heart. To him the Holy Spirit yields His place and departs.

A Christian can notice that, when he yields to sin in the very least, his trust in God is promptly diminished. He also feels that, if he does not turn back on the spot, sin will rule him and he will be unfit to believe. In such moments the Christian goes down on his knees and calls upon God with tears, — though that is not an essential part of repentance, — saying: "Thou knowest, O God, that I do not want to sin," as Peter declared to Christ: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." John 21, 17. Peter could call upon the Lord as his witness. Having a good conscience, he could say to Christ: "Thou canst look into my heart; is it not so? Why, then, dost Thou ask me?" That

is the language every Christian must be able to use when speaking to God: "My God, Thou knowest that I do not want to sin, and yet I am sinning. Thou knowest that I have become an enemy to sin."

Hence the second requisite which Paul wants to see in every Christian is true love, love that proceeds from faith unfeigned. Faith unfeigned is not a painted, but a real, living, genuine faith of the heart.

Faith and good conscience must be companions. A person that has no good conscience certainly is without faith. Of such people the apostle says that they have "made shipwreck concerning faith," 1 Tim. 1, 19; they have cast the precious treasure of faith overboard.

Even after our conversion we lack the true fear of God, and all our sins are great sins. Even the so-called sins of weakness of which the righteous cannot rid themselves must not be regarded as a paltry matter. Although they do not extinguish faith, they are no jest.

Luther's rejection of the sinner's appeal to predestination is meant as a warning to us not to reason ourselves into a state of security on the ground that we simply shall have to go to heaven because we are predestinated. The major of the syllogism is true: Whoever is predestinated will certainly go to heaven. But there is no evidence for the minor, *viz.*, whether the party indulging in the above reasoning is predestinated. If a person lives in sin and continues that kind of life, this is a sign that he is not predestinated. Not as though God did not want to have him on any account, but because He foresaw that His grace would be misapplied by this or that wicked person.

Nobody can question that Adam and Eve were elect, and yet they fell, lost the image of God, the Holy Spirit, their holiness, in short, everything. But they repented and were thus restored to a state of grace.

As soon as faith is lost through some mortal sin, the grace of God is also lost, and such a person becomes a child of death and damnation. He may return to faith and ultimately be saved, but in the interval he was not a blessed, but an utterly miserable, lost creature.

A person with whom God is angry or whom He hates is not accepted with Him. There may have been elect persons in the congregation at Pergamos. But God hated also these elect persons and was angry with them because, for the time being, they had driven His grace, faith, and the Holy Spirit out of their hearts.

TWENTY-FIRST EVENING LECTURE.

(March 6, 1885.)

My Friends: —

The world of unbelievers regards the tenet of the Christian religion that for salvation everything depends on a person's faith as an impossibility and discredits it. It seems to them a manifest folly, yea, a proof that even the Christian religion, like all the other religions that have originated from so-called supernatural revelations, is bent on deluding people. They claim that the Christian religion, which purports to be supernaturally revealed, by making faith the chief requisite for salvation, is not superior to Brahmanism, which requires faith in the Vedas, the sacred books of the Hindus, or Mohammedanism, which requires chiefly faith in the Koran of Mohammed, the acknowledged prophet of lies, as containing the true religion of salvation. Their argument is that it is a matter of no moment to the Father in heaven what a person believes or disbelieves, since true religion cannot consist in anything else than an upright life, the exercise of virtue and good works. What sin, they say, can there be in a person's failure to believe, something that is utterly contrary to his God-given reason? If there is a God and a future Judgment, men, they claim, will on that day not be asked what they have believed, but how they have conducted themselves during their present life.

Others, endeavoring to enter more deeply into the matter, assert that, if the Father in heaven is especially pleased with a person's faith, because it is such a glorious work and such a beautiful virtue, they can see no reason whatever why He should not be equally well pleased, for instance, with a person's charity, patience, fortitude, justice, impartiality, truthfulness, and similar qualities.

What is the source from which these objections to the Christian doctrine concerning faith spring? Gross ignorance is, without question, the primary source. People simply do not know what faith is according to the Holy Scriptures. Far from regarding justifying and saving faith as nothing else than holding fast stubbornly and strictly to certain religious teachings, as the Hindus and Mohammedans view faith, the Christian doctrine rather declares this to be entirely useless, yea, as leading people straightway to perdition. It tells men that, if they have no better reliance, they are building on sand. Moreover, far from assigning to faith such a prominent position on the assumption that faith is a glorious

work and a precious virtue, Christianity teaches, on the contrary, that faith does not justify and save a person because it is such a good work, but on account of the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ, which faith apprehends. This reflection takes us back once more to our tenth thesis.

A week ago we were told that faith is not a dead, inert affair, but something that transforms and renews the heart, regenerates a person, and brings the Holy Spirit into his soul. To-night we shall be occupied chiefly with the second part of the tenth thesis, which states that the Word of God, the Law and the Gospel, is not rightly divided, but commingled, *when the preacher describes faith in a manner as if it makes a person righteous and saves him for the reason that it produces in him love and a reformation of his mode of living.*

The Holy Scriptures emphatically testify that there can be no genuine faith without love, without a renewal of heart, without sanctification, without an abundance of good works. But it testifies at the same time that the renewal of heart, love, and the good works which faith produces, are not the justifying and saving element in a person's faith. Innumerable passages of Scripture could be cited in proof of this statement; we shall dwell only on the principal passages.

Rom. 4, 16 says: *Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.* Paul here declares that the very reason why we teach righteousness by faith is because we teach that a person is justified in the sight of God and saved by grace. Now, if faith were to make us righteous because of some good quality inherent in us, it would be a wrong conclusion to teach a person's justification by faith, since he is justified and saved by grace. Justification is by grace, through faith; however, not because of good qualities inherent in faith. In justification that is not at all taken into consideration, but merely the fact that Jesus Christ has long ago redeemed the entire world, that He has done and suffered all that men ought to have done and suffered, and that men are merely to accept His work as their own. Hence the way to salvation is this: We are doing nothing, absolutely nothing, towards our salvation, but Christ has already done everything for us, and we must merely cling to what He has done, draw consolation from His finished work of redemption, and trust in it for our salvation. This passage in Romans is a precious text, a text that deserves to be remembered. If something that we must do belonged to the justifying quality of faith, the apostle

would in this text be drawing a false conclusion. In that case he should have said: "by faith, in so far as it aids us to accomplish something good." But that is not the reason why faith justifies; it justifies because it accepts the merit of Christ. Faith is only the hand with which we grasp what God offers.

Phil. 3, 8. 9 the same apostle states: *I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* Another precious passage, a veritable sun, shedding bright light on the real essence of faith. The apostle declares that he is indeed righteous; however, the righteousness which he has obtained by faith is not at all his own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ. Accordingly, when we become righteous by faith, we are made righteous by an alien righteousness. God beholds in us absolutely nothing that He could count as righteousness to our credit. It is Another's righteousness which we have by faith. We have not acquired it or contributed anything towards it. Had we contributed love towards it, and were God to justify us on that account, our righteousness would not be an alien righteousness, or it would at least be only half alien, to supplement our own imperfect righteousness. The apostle declares: "I have no righteousness of my own, but only the righteousness which God credits to faith."

Rom. 4, 5 the apostle states: *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.* When a person is justified, he has been previously a godless, not a godly person made godly by faith and on that account godly. Any one possessing genuine faith acknowledges that he has been godless, meriting hell and damnation, lost, contaminated with sin from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, and that a divine miracle of grace was performed on him when God said to him the moment he believed in his Savior: "Thou art counted as righteous: I behold in thee no righteousness of thine own, but I cover thee with the righteousness of My Son and henceforth behold in thee nothing but righteousness." Whoever does not come to Christ as an ungodly person does not come to Him at all.

Eph. 2, 8. 9 we read: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.* This sounds as if the apostle felt that he

was not saying enough to keep men from being led astray into self-righteousness. First he says: "By grace are ye saved"; next, he adds: "through faith." Lest some one think he had achieved this feat by his faith, the apostle continues: "and that not of yourselves." Whence, then, is it? "It is the gift of God"; and to head off any thought of a person's own merit, he adds: "not of works," such as a person's love, or charity, would be. He winds up with the statement: "Lest any man should boast." Now, a person who claims that faith justifies on account of love which follows it could say: "I have been justified by faith, but that was because I loved at the same time, because I had performed good works at the same time, because I had become a different person. That is why God regards me as righteous." This thought the apostle rules out of order by his concluding remarks. Whoever imagines that there is a little aureole, a little glory, that he may claim as his own is still without the faith that justifies, is still blind, and is not walking in the way of salvation, but is headed straight for perdition.

Rom. 11, 6 the apostle writes: *If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.* The apostle tries to make the element of grace quite plain. He invites his readers to reflect that, when they admit that their salvation is "by grace," it cannot be by merit, for that would destroy the idea of grace. Adding merit to grace renders grace void. In that case all talk of grace is miserable bosh. On the other hand, if salvation is by the merit of works, grace does not count, or merit would not be merit. Nothing remains, then, for a person but to believe firmly that he has been made righteous out of God's pure, everlasting mercy, by faith. Even when his faith bears good fruits, these follow later, after he has received all that is necessary for his salvation. First a person is saved, then he becomes godly. First he must be made an heir of heaven, then he becomes a different person. Here we have the wonderful quality of the Christian religion. If a person wants to do everything himself to get to heaven, he is lost. No; he must first be made an heir of heaven and be saved; after that he begins to live a life filled with gratitude to God.

That is why Luther says that the Christian religion is, in a word, a religion of gratitude. All the good that Christians do is not done to merit something. We would not know what to take up for the purpose of acquiring merit. Everything has been given us: righteousness, our everlasting heritage, our salvation. All that

remains for us to do is to thank God. And then there is this, that out of great kindness God proposes to give to those who are specially faithful in this life a peculiar glory in addition to their salvation. That is no paltry affair in the life to come. For God bestows extraordinary gifts when He gives those gifts of glory. There will be a great difference among Christians in the life to come. For even the least plus which one of the saints receives above that which his fellow-saints get in heaven is no trifle. Why? Because it is an ever-enduring gift. For that reason we must be truly grateful to God, after having received eternal life, for all that we are and possess. Only works proceeding from gratitude are genuinely good works. Even in our secular relations, when a person is very willing to render services to another because he hopes for a reward, we denounce him as a miserable cheat who pretended love to us while he speculated on financial gain and simulated disinterested service for pay. Such a person nauseates us: he figures on getting more from us than he does for us and becomes malicious and hostile to us when his hopes are frustrated.

The real good works, therefore, are works to which gratitude toward God prompts us. Whoever has true faith never thinks of meriting something good for himself by his service. He cannot help expressing his gratitude by love and good works. His heart has been changed: it has been softened by the richness of God's love which he has experienced. Over and above this God is so gracious that He rewards even the good works which He accomplishes in us. For the good works done by Christians are God's works.

The objection is raised against us that in sanctification a person is surely doing something himself. But a person never begins any good work of his own accord. God must prompt him and work in him even to will, to desire to do, the good work that he is to perform. Accordingly, whenever Christians seem to do something good, it is by the power and operation of God in them that they do it.

The papists occasionally say that a person is justified and saved by faith, but they add: "provided love is added to faith." They do not mean to say merely this, that the person who has no love has no faith. That is what we also teach, in accordance with Scripture. What they mean is this: A person may have the true faith, wrought in him by the Holy Spirit, but if love is not added to it, faith is absolutely worthless. That is why they call love the *forma* of faith. In theological terminology, you know, *forma* is that which makes a matter what it is (= essential quality). The

papists declare that, if love is not added to faith, faith may be genuine, but it is not justifying faith, because love is the *forma* of faith, which makes justifying faith what the name indicates. Such faith they call *fides formata,* faith that has received the proper form. If love has not been added, they call that faith *fides informis,* faith without its proper form.

The *Council of Trent,* in its sixth session, adopted chap. VII, canon 28, which reads: "Faith, when love is not added to it, neither forms a vital union with Christ, nor does it make a person a living member of the body of Christ. Catechumens acquire the faith which confers eternal life, which faith without love cannot confer. For this reason they are told immediately the word of Christ: 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.'"

The papists do not speak of "faith from which love springs." That would be correct; for if faith does not produce love, it is a mere sham. What they mean is this: You may have a good faith, but it does not justify you if love is not added to it. Love is not to flow from faith; that is something altogether impossible according to their teaching, because they understand by faith the mere inert mental perception of the doctrines of the Church. Love, they say, must be added to faith, then faith will justify you. Well, if that is the case, what, then, is it that justifies? Only love, or a person's good works. They do not say this in plain terms, but any person who reflects but a little on what they say is compelled to get this meaning out of their remarks: If faith does not justify in the first place, then it must be that alone which is added to faith which does the justifying.

By catechumens the papists mean those who want to join their Church. These are told that without love faith does not confer everlasting life, and the words of Christ in Matt. 19, 17 are cited to them for proof. Here we have the papists' faith: Faith, though admittedly necessary, does not obtain everlasting life. They say: If a person does not keep the commandments, faith is of no help to him. After he has complied with the command of Christ to believe, he must comply with the other command, to keep the commandments.

The rich young man in Matt. 19 had asked the Lord: "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" His question had not been: "What must I do?" but: "What *good* thing shall I do?" Accordingly, Christ had to tell him: "You must keep the commandments." That did not mean that the rich young man could really keep them; the Lord was simply answering the question of

this person who was head over heels merged in self-righteousness. When the Lord failed to cure him of his awful blindness by telling him that he must love God above all things and his neighbor as himself, He gave him an additional lesson by telling him to sell all that he had and give it to the poor. That lesson sent the young man away with a sad heart. The sting had without question been driven home to him; he knew now that he did not love God above all things. He had to acknowledge that Jesus had judged him rightly. But he was not seriously concerned about his salvation, otherwise he would have admitted that he was unable to do what the Lord commanded and would be lost if that was the only way to obtain everlasting life. Had he admitted that, the Lord would have told him: "Here is One who can save you. Believe in Me, and though you were an abominable man and had wantonly transgressed the commandments, you will be saved." But he went away. Without doubt, if he had become a believer, Scripture would have recorded that fact.

Some one might think that possibly the papists, after all, meant only this, that a dead lip-faith does not justify a person — exactly what we teach ourselves. But no; they mean to say: No matter how good a person's faith is, it does not save him unless love is added to it. That is about as wise a statement as if I would say: An apple-tree may be ever so good; but unless you add fruit to it, it is not an apple-tree. Why, the reverse is true. Apples do not make an apple-tree, but the apple-tree produces apples.

However, the papists have expressed themselves quite plainly on this matter. In the aforementioned chapter and canon the Council of Trent decreed: "If any one says that faith is lost at the same time when grace is lost by sin, or that the faith which remains in the sinner is not genuine faith, although it may not be a living faith, or that the person who has faith without love is not a Christian, let him be accursed."

They assert, then, that a person falling into mortal sin does not lose faith. We would say that a person living in mortal sin may possess a perfect historical faith; however, we add that such faith is not genuine, but a mere sham. The papists, however, declare it to be genuine faith. They speak of faith as something apart from love. Love must join faith in their view in order to make faith good. They regard faith as a beautiful receptacle that serves no other purpose than to store something away in it. The treasure that is to be placed in this vessel is love. When placed

in the vessel, it makes the vessel much more precious than the vessel previously was. Thus the papists hold that faith is made precious through the addition of love. Or they may put it this way: Faith justifies, however, with the understanding that it has love.

In the days of John Gerhard the theologians of Cologne, at that time the best-reputed theologians of Rome, published the *Censura Coloniensis*. In this treatise they state: "The fact that the just lives by his faith is not due solely to Christ or His work; yea, its justifying *forma,* or power, it does not derive from Christ, whom it apprehends and possesses, but from its own love." This statement declares, not only that love must be added to faith, but that in justifying faith love is the only reason why it justifies.

Let us now hear a few testimonies from Luther on the so-called *fides formata* as contrasted with the *fides informis,* or faith that has the true essence as placed over against that faith which, according to the papists' view, is indeed true faith, but does not justify.

In his *Commentary on Galatians* (St. L. Ed. IX, 357 f.) *Luther* says: "The Sophists [he means, the papistic theologians], ready to pervert the Scriptures, add these acute glosses to this passage [Gal. 3, 11]: 'The just lives by his faith'; however, by the faith that is efficacious, operates, or has obtained its proper form by love (*formata caritate*). If faith lacks this form (*informis*), it does not justify. This gloss they have spun out of their own brain; they are doing violence to the prophet's [Habakkuk's] words." (Luther means they have twisted and perverted this precious, comforting passage. Indeed, they say, the Apostle Paul as well as the prophet Habakkuk have stated: The just lives by his faith. But what faith does he mean? Why, an active faith that does good works, that has love, and that has renewed the person. That, that alone, is the faith which he meant, and it is only for this reason that man lives by faith.)

Luther proceeds: "I would not be displeased with their gloss if by faith properly formed they understood the genuine faith, of which we speak in theology, or, as Paul calls it, 'faith unfeigned.' For in that case faith would not be set up as something distinct over against love, but it would be in opposition to a vain opinion which man may have of faith. We, too, distinguish between spurious and genuine faith. A spurious or fictitious faith exists in a person who has heard about God, Christ, and all the mysteries of incarnation and redemption, who has perceived these matters mentally, and knows how to talk about them beautifully, yet all

remains vain imagination. His hearing of these matters has merely left an echo of the Gospel in his heart, concerning which he babbles. But it is not in reality faith; for it does not renew and transform the heart, does not produce a new man, but leaves the person in his former opinion and conduct. Such faith is actually baneful; it would be better for such a person not to have it. A moral philosopher of this world is better than a hypocrite who has this faith."

Mark well: Luther admits the phrase *fides formata* if it is to signify nothing else than genuine faith of the heart. He knew that a faith which does not purify the heart does not justify, but keeps its possessor in sin. The papists have at all times represented the Lutherans as teaching that faith alone justifies and that therefore the believer must do no good works. That is a shameful doctrine, calculated to repel people from the practise of good works. It would amount to telling the people to quit doing good works and only to believe, and heaven would immediately be their heritage. The better-informed papists, of course, know that this is not Lutheran doctrine. However, there are ever so many papists, even among the priesthood, who actually regard the Lutheran Church as a noxious sect, which teaches that the mere mental perception of certain tenets justifies and saves men and lands them in heaven, no matter what kind of life they lead. In opposition to this view, Luther declares that if *fides formata* signifies the faith wrought by the Holy Spirit, this faith is a fruitful source of all good works; and if it is said that this faith justifies, he is in full harmony with the papists. Only they must not add: Faith saves because it has the aforementioned beautiful form; for faith first justifies and saves a person, and after that it is also productive of good works.

Luther continues: "Accordingly, if they [the papists] were to distinguish faith properly formed (*fidem formatam*) from false or fictitious faith, their distinction would not be offensive to me. But they are speaking of faith that receives its proper form from love, and they establish two kinds of faith: faith unformed and faith properly formed (*informem et formatam*). This altogether noxious and diabolical gloss I am forced to repudiate in the strongest terms. For they say: Even where there is infused faith, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and, in addition, acquired faith, which we produce ourselves by many acts of believing, still, both these kinds are unformed; they receive their proper form by love."

Let us remember that a host of people have been snared by the Jesuits, and when reproved by Lutherans that they do not

teach justification by faith at all, they reply: "Your Lutheran preacher has told you that. We do not teach that doctrine. We are teaching a better doctrine than yours. You say: Only believe, and you will go to heaven. We say: A person is justified by faith, namely, by faith which worketh by love, as the Apostle Paul teaches." Now, a person not knowing that all this is a piece of knavery imagines that he has been wrongly informed about the doctrine of the Catholic Church. However, let no one permit himself to be deceived. The Jesuits do not speak of faith as a source of love, but of a faith that has love existing alongside of it. Hence it is a lie when they say in any sense that a person is justified by faith. When they add the term *formata* to *fides,* they really mean works; for they say that a person is justified by faith if he has works in addition to faith. Their faith is worth no more than the imitation money used in a business college or the toy money of children, which looks like real money, but has no purchasing power.

The Roman doctrine of justification is nothing else than a complete denial, annihilation, and condemnation of the Gospel. Any sect is incomparably better than the Papacy, the Roman Church. The sects worry ever so much over their works of piety, their wrestling for grace, and their prayers, but they still hold fast the teaching that faith in the Lord Jesus alone justifies and saves a person. When a poor Methodist or Baptist is in his final agony, he realizes that faith alone saves, and he dies saved when he takes refuge in the Lord Christ. But the dying papist has to think of purgatory and how long he may have to be confined in it because he lacks charity and good works. He has to consider himself lost. That was the devil's aim when he founded the Papacy — he wanted to destroy the redemption of Christ by the abominable doctrine that faith does not justify and save except when there is another element added to it which acquires salvation.

In conclusion Luther writes: "According to their fancy, faith without love is like a painting or anything beautiful to behold that is placed in the dark and cannot be seen until light is let into the place, that is, until love is added to it. By this view, love is made the essence of faith and faith the material on which love works. That means that love is placed above faith, and a person's righteousness is ascribed not to his faith, but to his love. For whatever gives a certain quality to something possesses that quality in a higher degree. Therefore the Romanists are really ascribing nothing at

all to faith, because they ascribe righteousness to faith only on account of love. Moreover, these perverters of the Gospel of Christ say that infused faith, which has not been obtained by preaching or some other operation, but is wrought in man by the Holy Spirit, can exist in a person who is guilty of a mortal sin and can be found in the worst scoundrels. For this reason they declare it an inert and useless thing when it is alone, even if it were to be of the wonder-working kind. Thus they rob faith entirely of its function and ascribe it to love, by declaring faith utterly worthless, unless that which gives faith its proper form, namely, love, is added to it."

In his *Commentary on Galatians* (on chap. 2, 19), *Luther* writes (St. L. Ed. IX, 218): "When I have thus apprehended Christ by faith, have become dead to the Law, justified from sin, and liberated from death, the devil, and hell by Christ, I begin to do good works, to love God, to show Him gratitude, and to practise love towards my fellow-man. But my love, or the works that follow after faith, neither give the proper form to my faith nor do they adorn it, but my faith gives love its proper form and adorns it." *Caritas non est forma fidei, sed fides est forma caritatis* — this axiom of Luther shows up still more plainly the hideousness of the papists' teaching regarding faith. For, mark you, they do not say that faith does not save when a person has formed faith by his own effort, but even when it is genuine faith, produced in a person's heart by the Holy Spirit. Even this true faith, they hold, can exist in a person who lives in mortal sin, as the Council of Trent has declared, and it does not justify a person unless love is added to it. The very opposite, Luther says, is true: It is faith that gives love its real essence and makes it genuine and good, not *vice versa.*

The papists regard Gal. 5, 6 as a valuable proof-text for their doctrine; but they totally misinterpret the text. Commenting on this text, *Luther* says (St. L. Ed. IX, 632 ff.): "The Sophists force this text to support their view that we must be justified by our love and good works. For, not to say anything of faith which a person has obtained by his own effort (*de fide acquisita*), they declare that even faith infused into a person by God does not justify unless it is given its proper form by love, because they call love that grace which makes a person acceptable in the sight of God (*gratiam gratum facientem*), what we, speaking in the words of Paul, would call justifying grace. Moreover, they say that love is obtained by

our merit, which God is in justice bound to reward (*nostro merito congrui*), etc. Yea, they even maintain that infused faith can exist in a person living in mortal sin. Thus they remove justification entirely from faith and attribute it to love alone; and they want to establish this doctrine of theirs by what Paul says in this passage, when he speaks of 'faith that worketh by love.' Just as if Paul had meant to say: See, faith does not justify; it amounts to nothing, unless work-producing love is added to it, which gives faith its proper form.

"However, all these strange, horrible ideas have been fabricated by unspiritual men. Could any one tolerate the doctrine that faith, the gift of God which is poured into men's hearts by the Holy Ghost, can exist alongside of mortal sin? One could tolerate such teaching if they were referring to faith which a person acquires by his own effort or to historical faith, that opinion which a person, by using his natural reason, forms from a study of historical faith. Their teaching would apply correctly to the latter kind of faith. But since they speak of imparted faith, they plainly reveal that they have no true understanding whatever of faith. Besides, they read this passage of Paul through a colored glass, as we say; they pervert the text and twist it so as to make it favor their fancy. For Paul does not say: faith which justifieth by love or faith which makes a person acceptable by love. A sense of that kind they have imagined and foisted upon this text by violence. Much less does the text say: Love makes a person acceptable. No; this is what the apostle says: 'faith which worketh by love.' He states that works are performed by faith through love, not that man is justified by love."

The papists, in their antichristian error of work-righteousness, mistake the scope of Gal. 5, 6. That text does not state what faith effects before God, but what it does viewed by itself: it is active through love, after it has obtained for the believer righteousness before God and everlasting salvation.

With the papists this error is fundamental, and within the Protestant churches there is also in most instances faulty teaching on this point. After declaring that salvation is altogether by grace, through faith, many Protestants add: "Of course, faith must produce also good works," because they are afraid the above statement might offend people if it were not qualified. But by adding the qualification, they have perverted and upset their whole preaching; for with that qualification all their preaching about grace and faith

is futile and a wasted effort. For what they say with that qualification sounds as if faith were not sufficient for justification and had to be reinforced by love. When you preach on this subject, this is how you must speak: Of course, a person that has not love, let him understand that he has not faith either; hence he cannot be righteous in God's sight. That is the proper way to speak, not because love justifies a person in God's sight, but because only that is genuine faith, wrought by God through the Holy Spirit, which flows forth in love of God and our fellow-men.

TWENTY-SECOND EVENING LECTURE.

(March 13, 1885.)

It is an undeniable fact, my friends, that at the present time there is a greater number of believing theologians than when I was young, fifty years ago. In those days hardly any others than vulgar rationalists occupied not only the ecclesiastical offices created by the government, but also almost all the pulpits. The small number of believing theologians were tolerated, provided they behaved by keeping quiet, made no serious attempt to confess their faith, and, above all, did not zealously oppose the forces of unbelief.

What a change has taken place since then within the so-called Protestant Church! Vulgar rationalists, who turn the Bible into a code of ethics and declare the specifically Christian doctrines to be Oriental myths and fantasies, valuable only as far as moral lessons may be drawn from them, — these men have done acting their part and have gone into bankruptcy. Persons laying claim to intelligence nowadays refuse to be classified as vulgar rationalists. True, the so-called Society of Protestants has made an attempt to reintroduce and rehabilitate vulgar rationalism, but without success. Even the spokesmen of the society declare that vulgar rationalism is antiquated. In order to be regarded as a person of brains, it is nowadays absolutely necessary for one to acknowledge that the Christian religion is a religion supernaturally revealed and the Bible in a sense the Word of God, namely, in as far as it contains God's Word.

By what process did these up-to-date "believers" attain to their "faith"? Was it by a living knowledge of their misery under sin? or by a keen perception of their damnable condition and their need of redemption? Alas! there is pitifully little evidence that such

has been the case. A careful observer can hardly get any other impression but that they arrived at their faith by rationalistic speculation. That is the reason why nearly all of them reject the verbal inspiration of the Bible and subject all books of the Bible to criticism such as only enemies of the Bible would engage in. Of course, they are not conscious of being enemies of the Bible. They have turned the Christian religion into a religious philosophy.

Modern theology, as to its essential qualities, is something entirely and absolutely different from the theology of former times. It does not pretend to be a system of faith, but wants to be a system of science. Modern theologians propose that, starting out from the principles of human knowledge, they are able to *prove* as absolute truth what the common people merely *believe*.

Accordingly, there is not in modern theologians that fear which animated David when he said: "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee." Ps. 119, 120. Such reverence in the presence of Holy Writ is found hardly anywhere. The Bible is nearly everywhere treated like the fables of Aesop. I am telling you the truth when I say this. When you begin later to compare the old with the modern theologians, you will see that I have not exaggerated. Science has been placed on the throne, and theology is made to sit at its feet and await the orders of philosophy. Accordingly, as soon as some one has become prominent in a domain of science that had not been cultivated by any one previously, he is promptly created a doctor of theology, as if science or learning were identical with theology.

Oh, my dear friends, unless you keep the light of the pure Gospel shining in this land of the setting sun, which has been visited last by God, it is not possible that the Day of Judgment be delayed. Our time is down to the dregs of the cup. The end is at hand. While the world stands, may God help us, at least in this part of it, which was reached last by the Gospel voice, to remain true to it! Do not forget, my dear friends, that there is but one way to arrive at true faith. God did not construct two or several ways, one for learned, the other for simple folk. God is not a respecter of persons; if the learned scholar wants to become a believer and be saved, he must come down from his height and sit with poor sinners, just like the cowherd and other simple folk. There is no other way to faith than that which leads through a person's knowledge of his sin and damnable condition, through the inward crushing of his heart in contrition and sorrow. A person

that has not come to faith by this way is not a believing Christian, much less a theologian.

However, I hope that I shall not be misunderstood when I call the aforementioned matters the only preparation for faith. If this statement is not understood correctly, it may result in an abominable confounding of Law and Gospel. This reflection leads us to the consideration of

Thesis XI.

In the seventh place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when there is a disposition to offer the comfort of the Gospel only to those who have been made contrite by the Law, not from fear of the wrath and punishment of God, but from love of God.

This thesis describes chiefly the method of the Roman Church; however, the same method is adopted by all fanatics and all Pietists within the so-called Protestant Church. If among these people a person is found who is alarmed over his sins and is in a state of contrition and sorrow because of them, he is asked to state the source of his contrition; particularly, whether he feels sorry for his sins merely because he knows that he is going to perdition and sees nothing above him but the wrath of God and nothing beneath him but the abyss of damnation. If he admits that such is his condition, the papists and fanatics tell him that contrition to be genuine and worthy of the name must proceed from love of God, and the Gospel cannot be proclaimed to him until he has such contrition. This is an appalling error, which can easily be shown to be such. Since the Fall the Law, you know, has but a single function, *viz.*, to lead men to the knowledge of their sins. It has no power to renew them. That power is vested solely in the Gospel. Only faith worketh by love; we do not become spiritually active by love, by sorrow over our sins. On the contrary, while still ignorant of the fact that God has become our reconciled God and Father through Christ, we hate Him. An unconverted person who claims that he loves God is stating an untruth and is guilty of a miserable piece of hypocrisy, though he may not be conscious of it. He sets up a specious claim, because only faith in the Gospel regenerates a person. Accordingly, a person cannot love God while he is still without faith. To demand of a poor sinner that he must, from love of God, be alarmed on account of his sins and feel sorry for them is an abominable perversion of Law and Gospel.

Here is the Biblical doctrine: The sinner is to come to Jesus just as he is, even when he has to acknowledge that there is nothing

but hatred of God in his heart, and he knows of no refuge to which he may flee for salvation. A genuine preacher of the Gospel will show such a person how easy his salvation is: Knowing himself a lost and condemned sinner and unable to find the help that he is seeking, he must come to Jesus with his evil heart and his hatred of God and God's Law; and Jesus will receive him as he is. It is His glory that men say of Him: Jesus receives sinners. He is not to become a different being, he is not to become purified, he is not to amend his conduct, *before* coming to Jesus.—He who alone is able to make him a better man is Jesus; and Jesus will do it for him if he will only believe.

The proof for this doctrine from God's Word is contained in that most general statement Rom. 3, 20: *By the Law is the knowledge of sin.* Here the apostle states the function of the Law: it produces, not love, but the knowledge of sin. A person can, indeed, possess that knowledge without love of God.

Rom. 5, 20 we read: *The Law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.* The Greek text reads: *ἵνα πλεονάσῃ τὸ παράπτωμα,* that is, "that sin might be *increased*." Many sins are slumbering in a person who is still ignorant of the Law. Let the Law be preached to such a person forcefully, let it strike his conscience with lightning force, and the person will not become better, but worse. He begins to rear up against God and say: "What! I am to be damned? True, I know that I am an enemy of God. But that is not my fault; I cannot help it." That is the effect of the preaching of the Law. It drives men to desperation. Blessed the person who has been brought to this point: he has taken a great step forward on the way to his salvation. Such a person will receive the Gospel with joy, while another who has never passed through an experience of this kind yawns when he hears the Gospel preached and says: "That is an easy way to get to heaven!" Only a poor sinner, on the brink of despair, realizes what a message of joy the Gospel is and joyfully receives it.

Rom. 4, 15 the apostle writes: *The Law worketh wrath.* [Luther: wrath *only.*] It incites men, not to love of God, but only to hatred of Him.

Rom. 7, 7. 8 St. Paul says: *What shall we say, then? Is the Law sin? God forbid! Nay, I had not known sin but by the Law; for I had not known lust except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought*

in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the Law sin was dead. We always reach out for what has been definitely forbidden. Man is always tempted to act contrary to an injunction or a prohibition. Even filthy Ovid had made this experience when he wrote: *Nitimur in vetitum semper cupimusque negata.* To be sure, even a heathen could have an experience of this kind. Ovid was a genius, but a profligate person. Among other things, he turned his thought also upon himself.

Gal. 3, 21 the apostle writes: *Is the Law, then, against the promises of God? God forbid! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have been by the Law.* Why this question and the hypothetical clause? The apostle, no doubt, means to make the intended negation stronger. Often when a question is raised concerning something which everybody knows is not so, the intention is to bring about a very strong negation. That is the case in this text: the apostle means to say: The Law certainly cannot save a person.

2 Cor. 3, 6 we read: *The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.* This precious text is horribly perverted by the Evangelical (*Unierte*) Church. These people argue: It is wrong to insist on the letter of Scripture. The spirit, general ideas drawn from Scripture, is what must be held fast. Luther's action at Marburg, when he wrote the words: *Τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ σῶμά μου,* and pointed to these words again and again is regarded as not a Christian action by these people. Indeed, Luther's action was not unionistic, but it was genuinely Christian. The meaning of the apostle in this text, as further study will show you, is: The Law killeth, but the Gospel giveth life.

These Bible-texts are illustrated by beautiful examples recorded in Scripture, which relate exactly the conduct of certain persons before their conversion and after they had become believers. There are not many of these instances recorded, but all of them show that contrition does not flow from love of God.

On the first Christian festival of Pentecost a multitude of people had gathered and heard the Apostle Peter preach. The gist of his remarks was that they were the murderers of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and must tremble when thinking of the Judgment. They had listened to Peter's whole address, but when he reached the point where he raised this charge against them, they became alarmed by the Holy Spirit. The record says: "They were pricked in their heart." They felt as if Peter had run a dagger

into their heart. They reasoned: If we have done that, we are all doomed men. What will God say to us when we appear before His judgment-seat? He will charge us with the slaying of the Messiah. We are not told that they said: "Oh, we feel so sorry for having grieved our faithful God." It was not love of God, but fright and terror that made them cry: "What shall we do?" Nor does the Apostle Peter say to them: "My dear people, we shall now have to investigate the quality of your contrition whether it flows from love of God or from fear of the punishment due you for your sins, from fear of hell." Not a word of this. When they put their frightened and terrified question: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" the apostle says: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Since these people were already in terror over their sins, the term *repentance* in this text refers not to what is called the first part of repentance, contrition, but to the second part, faith. We are told that they received Baptism immediately. Their μετάνοια, or change of mind, consisted in this, that they no longer desired to be murderers of Jesus, but wished to believe in Him. Accordingly, the apostles received them, and they were numbered with the congregation of those who were saved.

The example of the jailer at Philippi to which I have referred a number of times also illustrates the point now under discussion. I have to refer to it again and again because it is one of the most illuminating passages of Scripture. The jailer was a scoundrel, who relished the task of beating the servants of the Lord, casting them into the inner prison, or deepest dungeon, and putting their feet in the stocks, which he had not been commanded to do at all. When he imagined that all his prisoners had escaped during the earthquake, he was seized with despair and wanted to commit suicide. Paul cried to him: "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here"; and now the jailer fell writhing and trembling at the apostles' feet and asked: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Nothing but his fright and terror moved him to do that. Now Paul does not say to him: "First you must become contrite from love of God," but: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved and thy house."

Saul was put through the same experience. He had persecuted the Church of God, breathing threatenings and slaughter against all Christians. He was on the way to a place where he wanted to shed the blood of Christians, when the Lord Himself met him in a vision. He was hurled to the ground and was "astonished," stunned,

while Jesus said to him: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." When the Gospel with its sweet heavenly power had entered into his heart, this wretched man was plucked out of his distress and misery. And now the Lord prescribed for this sinner, who had been terrified and crushed and then comforted, no other lesson than this, that instead of persecuting Him, he was to confess Him after he had received Baptism as a seal of the forgiveness of his sins.

When you preach, do not be stingy with the Gospel; bring its consolations to all, even to the greatest sinners. When they are terrified by the wrath of God and hell, they are fully prepared to receive the Gospel. True, this goes against our reason; we think it strange that such knaves are to be comforted immediately; we imagine they ought to be made to suffer much greater agony in their conscience. Fanatics adopt that method in dealing with alarmed sinners; but a genuine Bible theologian resolves to preach the Gospel and faith in Jesus Christ to a person whom God has prepared for such preaching by His Law.

There is a passage in Scripture that is frequently misunderstood, namely 2 Cor. 7, 10, which reads: *For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.* "Godly sorrow" is supposed to mean sorrow of contrition from love of God. This is a mistake. The apostle refers to sorrow which man has not produced himself, but which God has caused in him by His Word. The Greek text reads: *κατὰ θεὸν λύπη,* sorrow in accordance with God or produced by God. It is another grievous perversion of the Christian doctrine to tell an alarmed sinner that he must first experience contrition, and when he asks how he must go about that, to tell him that he must sit down and meditate and try to draw, or elicit, repentance from his heart. That is what the papists teach. But their teaching is sheer hypocrisy. There is not in all the world a person who can produce contrition in himself. He may labor to bring it forth until he becomes dissolved in tears, but it is all a hypocritical sham. *Godly* sorrow is required because faith is required. God, by terrifying us, wants to produce this sorrow. We must not imagine that contrition is a good work which we do, but it is something that God works in us. God comes with the hammer of the Law and smites our soul. A person who wants to make himself sorrowful desires ever to increase his sorrow over sin. But a person merged in the right kind of sorrow yearns to be rid of it. He is tormented

day and night. He may frequent saloons and make a futile attempt to drive away his sorrow by drink. Among his companions he may be a braggart, but when he is at home, his conscience tells him: You are damned; if you die to-night you will go to perdition. That is godly sorrow, produced not by man, but by God Himself. God has no regard for any miserable product of man.

Let me present two testimonies from the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*. We read (Mueller, p. 168; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 254): "Moreover, our adversaries teach and write many things that are still more inept and confusing. They teach that grace may be merited by contrition. When they are asked to explain why Saul and Judas, in whom there was quite an awful contrition, did not merit grace, they ought to answer that Judas and Saul lacked the Gospel and faith, that Judas did not comfort himself with the Gospel and did not believe. For faith constitutes the difference between the contrition of Peter and Judas. But our adversaries give no thought to the Gospel and faith, but to the Law. They say that Judas did not love God, but was afraid of the punishment. Is not this an uncertain and inept way of teaching repentance? In that real great distress described in the Psalms and Prophets, when will an alarmed conscience know whether it fears God as its God from love or whether it flees from, and hates, His wrath and eternal damnation? These people may not have experienced much of these anxieties because they juggle words and make distinctions according to their dreams. But in the heart, when the test is applied, the matter turns out quite differently, and the conscience cannot be set at rest with paltry syllables and words, as these nice, leisurely, and idle Sophists are dreaming."

In the papists' view the reason why Judas perished was, because his contrition did not flow from love of God; if it had, he would have acquired merit. Papists are always looking for some merit, either of the *de congruo* or of the *de condigno* kind.*

It is impossible to ascertain the motive of a person's contrition. No matter what it is: when we behold some one in terror of hell, we are to comfort him. The love of God will surely be manifested by him later.

Papists talk about contrition as a blind man talks about color; they have never experienced a salutary terror on account

* "The adversaries . . . infer that works merit grace, sometimes *de congruo* and at other times *de condigno*, namely, when love is added." (*Apology; Trigl. Conc.*, p. 223, § 265.)

of their sins. When a poor sinner comes to one of their learned theologians, he is asked: "What is the quality of this contrition that causes you distress?" The poor man may be unable to explain this point promptly, and he says that he knows nothing about it, but that he feels terribly distressed. Then the learned doctor may direct him to apply to a surgeon for a cupping; he will feel better when he is rid of his sluggish blood. Good Heavens, what great theologians! How can they speak properly of matters of which they have no experience and which are to them mere subjects of speculation?

Again, the *Apology* says (Mueller, p. 171 f.; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 259 f.): "When we speak *de contritione,* that is, regarding genuine contrition, we cut out those innumerable questions which they cast up, *viz.*, whether a person's contrition flows from love of God or from fear of punishment. For these are nothing but mere words and a useless babbling of persons who have never experienced the state of mind of a terrified conscience. But we say that contrition is the true terror of conscience, when it begins to feel its sin and the anger of God against sin and is sorry for having sinned. And this contrition takes place in this manner when our sins are censured by the Word of God. . . . Amidst these terrors the conscience feels the serious anger of God against sin, which is a matter entirely unknown to such idle and carnal men as the Sophists and their like. It is then that the conscience first becomes aware what a great disobedience to God sin is; it is then that the terrible anger of God presses down on the conscience, and human nature cannot possibly bear up under it unless it is raised up by the Word of God. Thus says St. Paul: 'By the Law I am dead to the Law.' For the Law does nothing but accuse the conscience; it commands people what to do and terrifies them. In this connection the adversaries do not say a word concerning faith, hence they do not teach one word regarding the Gospel, or Christ, but their teaching is entirely from the Law. They tell people that with their pain, contrition, sorrow, and anguish they are meriting grace, provided their contrition is from love of God and provided they love God. Good Heavens, what kind of preaching is that to consciences that are in need of comfort! How can we love God when merged in such great distress and unutterable agony, when we feel the great and terrible earnestness and anger of God, which is stronger than any person could express by words? Why, it is nothing else than sheer despair that these preachers and

doctors are teaching when they preach to poor consciences in distress, not the Gospel nor any comfort, but only the Law."

The Lutheran Confessions offer to poor sinners this sweet comfort, that, when God has given them the grace to be alarmed on account of their sins, they are in a fit condition to approach the throne of grace, where they receive forgiveness — the true remedy for their ills. They must indeed have contrition; however, not to the end of acquiring some merit by it, but in order that they may gladly accept what Jesus offers them.

Even when there is love of God in a person's heart, it will be spoiled by the devil. Under the influence of false teaching a dying person may be led into despair; he may have contrition, but he feels that it does not flow from love of God, but from his fear of the anger of God and of hell, into which he fears he is about to be hurled. But when instructed in the true doctrine, he knows that he believes in the Lord Jesus and clings to Him, and hence the love of God will also enter his heart. You see, this teaching is no jest.

When our Lutheran theologians wrote our Confessions, they sat down to their work as true Christians and did not intend to construct a system of doctrine. They knew in what way a poor sinner is given rest and the consolation of salvation. In the Apology, Melanchthon has spoken like a simple Christian. What has made this Confession all the more precious is that he speaks all that he says from the fulness of Scripture and his own experience.

In 1545 an edition of the Latin writings of Luther was published. In the preface to the first part, Luther relates what was the condition of his heart before he had received the light of the Gospel. He makes a personal confession, saying that, while he was in bondage to the Law, he had read the words of the Apostle Paul that the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel and had become terrified by that statement. Having been terrified previously by the Law and reading now that in the Gospel, too, the righteousness of God is revealed, he was in an awful dilemma. The Law had condemned him, and now God sent him the Gospel to do the same thing to him! In the Gospel, too, God demanded righteousnes of the sinner!

We cannot sufficiently thank and praise God for giving Luther, shortly before his departure, leisure to relate some of the inner experiences of his life which were to prepare and fit him for the work of the Reformation.

He writes (St. L. Ed. XIV, 446 ff.): "I verily had a hearty desire, indeed, I was yearning, to understand the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. So far nothing had hindered me except only the single phrase *justitia Dei* [the righteousness of God] in v. 17 of the first chapter, where Paul says: 'The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel.' I was very wroth at this term 'righteousness of God' because my training had been according to the usage and practise of all teachers at that time, and I had been told that I must understand this term after the manner of philosophers as signifying that righteousness by which God is righteous in His essence, does right, and works righteousness, and punishes all sinners and unrighteous persons, — what is called *justitia formalis seu activa* (essential, or active, righteousness). Now, my condition was this: Although I was leading the life of a holy and blameless monk, I discovered than in the sight of God I was a great sinner. Moreover, my conscience was troubled and distressed, nor did I venture to reconcile God with my own satisfactions and merits. For this reason *I did not at all love this righteous and angry God,* who punishes sinners, *but I hated Him* and was full of secret anger against Him, and that, in all seriousness. (I am afraid that this was, or may have to be accounted as, blasphemy.) Frequently I would say: Is God not satisfied with having loaded all manner of misery and affliction, besides the terrors and threatenings of the Law, on us poor, miserable sinners, who are already condemned to everlasting death on account of hereditary sin? Must He increase this misery and heartache still more by the *Gospel* and by its preaching and its message proclaim His righteousness and serious anger and add to our terror? In my confused conscience I was full of indignation. Nevertheless I continued my meditation on blessed Paul, endeavoring, with a great thirst for knowledge and a hearty desire, to ascertain his meaning in this passage. I spent days and nights in these musings, until by the grace of God I perceived *the connection of these words* in the passage, thus: *The righteousness of God* is revealed in the Gospel, *as* is written: 'The just shall live by his *faith*.' From this connection I learned to understand that righteousness of God by which the righteous lives by the gracious gift of God, through faith alone, and I perceived *this* to be the apostle's meaning: By the Gospel that righteousness is revealed which is valid in the sight of God and by which God, from grace and pure mercy, makes us righteous by faith. In Latin this righteousness is called *justitia passiva,* and to this righteousness the fact refers which says: 'The just shall live by his faith.'

At this point I immediately felt that I had been entirely born anew and had found a door wide open, leading straight into paradise."

Luther's life as a monk had been irreproachable. He had tormented himself nigh unto death trying to keep his monastic vows, and spite of all his endeavors he had become broken-hearted; for the Holy Spirit, by the Law, had revealed to him the corruption of his heart. He did not regard this condition of his heart as a trifling matter; it filled him with anxiety and uncertainty. He desired to make full satisfaction for his sins and to keep not only the Ten Commandments, but also the commandments of the Church, which were not enjoined at all by God. Thus he lived on in papistic blindness. Occasionally he would doubt the validity of all his doings and ask himself, What does God care whether I am lying on a sack of straw or on a couch of velvet and satin?

Luther confesses that at that time God had become hateful to him. Now, ask any modern theologian whether he had loved God prior to his conversion, and he will say: "Why, yes; who would not love God? We have always been taught to do that." But that shows their blindness. If we would watch ourselves, we would become aware that our condition, before faith was kindled in our hearts, has been identical with that of Luther. No one who has been smitten by the Law will be surprised at Luther's confession.

While in terror and distress under the Law, Luther read in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans that also in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed. At that time he had no inkling of the sweet consolation contained in that statement. Nowadays every child knows that the text does not refer to that righteousness which God requires of us in the Law, but to the righteousness of Christ which God wants to give us and which Luther has well expressed by translating *ἡ δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ* "the righteousness which is valid, or passes muster, in the sight of God." By this translation even the simplest person can understand that the text does not refer to the righteous life which we have lived and according to which we shall be judged, but to the gracious righteousness which Christ acquired for us on the cross.

While Luther's natural heart was raving against God, he was but a short step from the brink of despair. He picked up his Bible again and again and kept staring at Rom. 1, 17. He began to think that possibly the text had a different meaning, after all. During his persistent musing, reading, and meditating God helped him to see the light, and what happened to him when he had found the

meaning of the text he has told us. The same man who had previously hated God and murmured against him now was filled with joy unspeakable. He began to love God with all his heart after hearing the most blessed tidings of joy: Christ, the Son of God, has acquired righteousness for the whole world. Only believe in this righteousness.

God grant to all of you, as He did to Luther, to see the gates of paradise wide open to receive you! Then your congregations will get a taste of your own happiness, and you will be kept from falling into dead orthodoxism.

In his *Vindiciae Sacrae Scripturae,* § 79, p. 125, *Huelsemann,* commenting on 2 Cor. 7, 10, writes: "Paul does not say: You have roused sorrow in yourselves from love of God, but you have been given by me a godly sorrow, that is, a sorrow which is in accordance with the will or commandment of God. . . . Accordingly, Paul interprets godly sorrow to signify a sorrow which had been roused in the Corinthians by the power and the command of God. On the other hand, the sorrow of the world signifies a sorrow which arises from worldly causes, such as the fear of temporal punishment, the loss of personal honor, an evil conscience, and other causes which produce sorrow over some crime even in heathens and unregenerate persons."

This passage, then, refers to a sorrow in the presence of God on the part of the person who has become alarmed because of his sins. When I am terrified by the thought of my sins, hell, death, and damnation and perceive that God is angry with me and that, being under His wrath, I am damned on account of my sins, — that is godly sorrow, even though I may be in the same condition in which Luther was before he got the right knowledge of the Gospel. Such sorrow comes from God. On the other hand, when a fornicator, a rake, a drunkard, begins to sorrow because he has wasted the beautiful time of his youth, has ruined his body, and has become prematurely senile, — that is a sorrow of this world. When a vain person is thrown into sorrow over his sins because he has lost somewhat of his prestige; when a thief sorrows over his thieving because it has landed him in jail; — that is worldly sorrow. However, when a person grieves over his sins because he sees hell before him, where he will be punished for having insulted the most holy God, that is godly sorrow, provided that it has not been produced by imagination through a person's own effort. Genuine godly sorrow can be produced by God alone. May God grant us all such sorrow!

TWENTY-THIRD EVENING LECTURE.

(March 20, 1885.)

Among the various functions and official acts of a servant of the Church the most important of all, my friends, is preaching. Since there is no substitute for preaching, a minister who accomplishes little or nothing by preaching will accomplish little or nothing by anything else that he may do.

Here is where the papists differ with us. They call their ministers priests and assert that the most important of all functions of a priest is to baptize, hear confession and pronounce absolution, administer Communion, and, above all, to offer to God the sacrifice of the Mass. Setting aside the sacrifice of the Mass, which is the greatest abomination that has ever been practised in the Christian Church, we are forced to say that all baptizing, pronouncing absolution and administering of Communion is useless if these matters have not been previously made the subjects of preaching to the people; for they are not the works of men, but of God Himself, who has connected with them a promise to be apprehended by faith. Accordingly, all these acts do not profit, but are rather harmful, in the absence of faith. If these operations of God are to be of any use, it is absolutely necessary that a thorough instruction concerning them be first given from the Word of God by preaching.

When Christ was about to return to the glory which He had with the Father before the foundation of the world, He gave His disciples, together with their commission, this instruction: "Go ye into all the world and *preach* the Gospel to every creature," or as Matthew puts it: "Go ye and *teach* all nations." Then He adds: "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Not satisfied with having said this, He concluded His instruction with these words: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Behold here the Alpha and Omega of the apostolic office, or the ministry of the Church: it is preaching and teaching.

This function, however, is not only the most important, but also the most difficult function assigned to a minister of the Church. There are ministers who imagine that preaching is easy to them, and the longer they are in the ministry, the easier preaching becomes to them; for they reason that, if they are only careful to preach nothing but the pure Word of God, without any admixture of heresy, that must be sufficient. Such preachers are laboring under a great, an awful, a very pernicious error. A mere pious

talk without aim and logical order is not real preaching. Genuine preaching is inspired only by the Holy Ghost through His Word. Accordingly, a real sermon is produced only after all the spiritual and intellectual energy of a truly believing preacher has been exerted to the utmost, after fervent prayer, after all earthly cares have been chased from the mind, and after the preacher has been freed from all vain desires. That is a difficult task.

Administering Baptism properly is easy; anybody can do it. Likewise, pronouncing absolution correctly is quite easy; even a boy can do it. Administering Holy Communion is also very easy; any intelligent Christian can do it. But to preach properly is difficult. For this reason a student of theology ought to make proper preaching his highest aim. For if he is unable to preach, he does not belong in the ministry. In our orthodox Church a servant of God is a minister of Jesus Christ, and his worth does not lie in a certain undefined quality that has been imparted to him at his ordination or consecration, in something that other people have not and which, for that reason, makes him such a sacrosanct and precious person. By no means; the worth of a true minister of the Church lies exclusively in his ability to preach properly. If he has not this ability, the pulpit is not the place for him; for the pulpit is for preaching. Preaching is the central element of every divine service.

What is to be effected by preaching? Bear in mind that the preacher is to arouse secure souls from their sleep in sin; next, to lead those who have been aroused to faith; next, to give believers assurance of their state of grace and salvation; next, to lead those who have become assured of this to sanctification of their lives; and lastly, to confirm the sanctified and to keep them in their holy and blessed state unto the end. What a task!

A preeminent point that we must not forget is this: To achieve this task, it is especially necessary rightly to divide the truth, as the apostle says, or properly to divide the Law and the Gospel from each other. When a person does not understand how to do this and always mingles either doctrine into the other, his preaching is utterly futile, in vain. More than this, a preacher of this kind does harm and leads the souls of men astray; he leads them to a false faith, a false hope, a false contrition, makes them mere hypocrites, and frequently hurls them into despair. To divide Law and Gospel properly is a very, very difficult task. As Luther says, all preachers cannot but remain mere apprentices in this art until death. Nevertheless, a young theologian must be able to recite at least the

first lesson in this curriculum. He must know the goal that he is to reach, and he must have made a start in reaching the goal.

In our previous evening lectures we learned something about the difficulty of dividing Law and Gospel. Let us increase the conviction which we have already attained by considering another instance of the commingling of these two doctrines.

Thesis XII.

In the eighth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the preacher represents contrition alongside of faith as a cause of the forgiveness of sin.

There is no question but that contrition is necessary if a person wishes to obtain forgiveness of his sins. At His first public exercise of the preaching function our Lord cried: "Repent and believe the Gospel." He names repentance first. Whenever this term is placed in opposition to faith, it signifies nothing else than contrition. When Christ gathered the holy apostles about Him for the last time, at the moment when He was about to ascend to heaven and to withdraw His visible presence from the Church, He said to them: "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name." Luke 24, 46. 47. Why is repentance required as well as faith? Our Lord gives the reason in these words: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. . . . I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Matt. 9, 12. 13. With these words the Lord testifies that the reason why contrition is absolutely necessary is that without it no one is fit to be made a believer. He is surfeited and spurns the invitation to the heavenly marriage feast. As far back as Solomon we find this proverb: "The full soul loatheth an honeycomb." Prov. 27, 7. Where there is no spiritual hunger and thirst, the Lord Jesus is not received. As long as a person has not been reduced to the state of a poor, lost, and condemned sinner, he has no serious interest in the Savior of sinners.

However, while bearing this fact in mind, you must not forget that contrition is not a cause of the forgiveness of sins. Contrition is not necessary on account of the forgiveness of sin, but on account of faith, which apprehends the forgiveness of sin. Here are the reasons why we say that the doctrine that contrition is a cause of the forgiveness of sins is a mingling of Law and Gospel: —

1. Contrition is an effect solely of the Law. To regard contrition as a cause of the forgiveness of sins is equivalent to turning the Law into a message of grace and the Gospel into Law — a perversion which overthrows the entire Christian religion.

2. Contrition is not even a good work. For the contrition which precedes faith is nothing but suffering on the part of man. It consists of anguish, pain, torment, a feeling of being crushed; all of which God has wrought in man with the hammer of the Law. It is not an anguish which a person has produced in himself, for he would gladly be rid of it, but cannot, because God has come down on him with the Law, and he sees no way of escape from the ordeal. If a person sits down to meditate with a view to producing contrition in himself, he will never gain his object that way. He cannot produce contrition. Those who think they can are miserable hypocrites. They seek to persuade themselves that they have contrition, but it is not so. Genuine repentance is produced by God only when the Law is preached in all sternness and man does not wilfully resist its influence.

It is not likely that one who calls himself a Lutheran preacher will ever say outright that contrition is a cause of the forgiveness of sins. Only papists will say that, never a Protestant preacher who has some conception of the pure doctrine. Still it not infrequently happens that preachers who claim to be true Lutherans mingle Law and Gospel by the way in which they describe contrition. In two ways they may speak of contrition as if it were a cause of the forgiveness of sins: either by saying too little or by saying too much about contrition.

Owing to their lack of experience many preachers are afraid they might lead people to despair. They do preach, as they should, that contrition must precede faith, but they fear that, unless they add some saving clause to that statement, one or the other member of their congregation may become despondent. For that reason they qualify their statement by saying that the pain one feels in contrition need not be very great, and that a person will be received by God if he only desires to be contrite. A comforting qualification of this kind really presents contrition as the cause of the forgiveness of sins, which is a false comfort. What the preacher ought to say is this: "Listen! When you have come to the point where you are hungering and thirsting for the grace of God, you have the contrition which you need. God does not require contrition as a means by which you are to atone for your sins, but only to the

end that you may be roused from your security and ask, 'What must I do to be saved?' "

Accordingly, Luther says that, when he had for the first time grasped the meaning of the term *repentance* (*poenitentia*), no word seemed sweeter to him than that, because he perceived that its meaning was not that he must do penance for his sins, but simply that he must be alarmed on account of his sins and desire the mercy of God. The term *repentance* was to him the very Gospel, because he knew that the moment he had been brought by God to the point where he acknowledged himself to be a poor and lost sinner, he was a proper subject for the attention of Jesus and could go to Him with the assurance that He would receive him as he was, with all his sins and anguish and misery.

A person must not inquire whether his contrition is sufficient for admitting him to Jesus. His very question about his fitness shows that he may come to Jesus. If one has the desire to come to Jesus, he has true contrition even if he does not feel it. It is the same as when a person begins to believe. I know from my personal experience that a person can have contrition without being aware of it. For years I had been genuinely contrite and on the brink of despair. I did not have the sweet consciousness that my heart was dissolved in sorrow for having grievously offended my Father in heaven, but I had the lively feeling that I was a lost sinner. At that time I applied to a person who was more experienced in these matters than I was, and in a few minutes he made me see the light. The statement, then, that God is satisfied with a person's mere desire to have contrition is evidence of a mingling of Law and Gospel; for such a statement represents contrition as a merit on account of which God is gracious to a sinner and forgives him his sins.

The same mistake is made when a pastor is readily satisfied with a slight sign of contrition in his parishioners. In wicked men, who have lived a long time in sin and shame, the conscience may suddenly become aroused and charge them, for instance, with having perjured themselves. They are seized with palpitating fear because of the consequences. Or their conscience may reprove them with having soiled their hands with the blood of murder. However, these people are not alarmed because they regard themselves as poor sinners, but it is one particular sin that frightens them. Outside of that they imagine they are good at heart. I witnessed an instance of this kind in Germany. A wicked person had committed perjury. He would not admit it, but began to be agitated every time some one spoke to him about it. During a call which I made on him

he had to take hold of the table to keep down his trembling, but he could not be induced to confess his sin. The result was that I could not preach the Gospel to him. There are many abandoned villains of this kind, who have already had their sentence of doom served on them. They may tell the pastor that they admit being at fault in this, that, or the other thing in which they slipped unavoidably, but they appeal to the fact that they are good at heart. If a pastor is satisfied with a partial contrition of this sort, he treats contrition as a merit, while it is nothing else than the bursting open of an ulcer. When a healing salve is spread on an open wound that still contains pus, the pus will eat deeper into the person, and the wound will not heal. The healing balm in spiritual therapy is the Gospel.

Others, again, probably say to their hearers that contrition is necessary, as Scripture testifies on every page, and that their own reason must tell them that God cannot forgive their sins which they treat so lightly. Then they proceed to describe to them what must be the quality of their contrition from texts like Ps. 38, 6—8: "I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart"; or Ps. 6, 7. 8: "I am weary with groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed with grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies." Legalistic pastors will ask their client whether he can say all these things concerning himself; whether he has ever gone bowed down and mourning for a whole day; whether there has been a time when his loins were dried up; whether he can say that there was no sound part in his whole body; whether he has wailed because of the unrest in his heart; whether he has watered his couch with his tears all night long; whether his friends have noticed that he looked as if he had grown fourteen years older in two weeks; etc. Unless he can point to these criteria of what they regard as genuine contrition, they tell him not to imagine that he has been truly contrite.

This method is utterly wrong. True, the texts cited describe David's repentance. But where is there a text that prescribes the same *degree* of contrition for every one? There is no such text; on the contrary, we find that when the hearts of Peter's hearers on the first Pentecost were pricked and they were moved to cry, "What shall we do?" the mercy of God was preached to them im-

mediately. David's own case serves as an illustration. He had lived in impenitence for an entire year when Nathan came to hold his awful sin up to him. With a contrite heart David cried: "I have sinned against the Lord." That was all. The prophet Nathan noticed at once that David had been struck down and was crushed. Accordingly, he said to him: "The Lord also hath put away thy sin." 2 Sam. 12, 13. The same thing we read about the jailer at Philippi. Only a few minutes before he had been so terribly agitated that he was about to take his own life. When he fell down before the apostles and cried, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" he was not told that he must produce contrition in himself, and that, a profound, a serious one; he was not reminded of the penitential acts of David, but he was promptly told: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." The apostles saw plainly that the man was crushed and craved mercy, and they regarded that as sufficient. When a person has been made to hunger and thirst for mercy, contrition has done its full work in him.

The Pietists claim that faith must be preceded by a long time of penitence; yea, they have warned people not to believe too soon, telling them that they must allow the Holy Spirit to work them over thoroughly. A person, they said, cannot be converted in two weeks; sometimes it takes many months and years during which God prepares him for conversion. That is an awful doctrine. These preachers do not consider what a tremendous responsibility they assume when they warn a person against believing prematurely. What will become of such a one if he dies before he is ready to believe? I know the awful effect of this teaching from experience. A Pietistic candidate of theology had instructed me in the manner which I have described. I did everything to become truly penitent and finally fell into despair. When I came to him to tell him my condition, he said: "Now it is time for you to believe." But I did not credit his advice; I thought that he was deceiving me because his last direction was out of keeping with the marks of penitence which he had described to me previously. Accordingly, I said to him: "If you knew my condition, you would not comfort me. What I want is rules for my further conduct." He gave me them too; but it was useless.

If we may assume, in all reasonableness, that a person has been pried loose from his self-righteousness and wants to be saved by grace alone, we should for God's sake confidently preach the Gospel to him. It will not be too soon. A person cannot possibly

come to Jesus too soon. The trouble is that people frequently do not really go to Jesus; they call themselves poor sinners, but are not; they want to bring before God some merit of their own. It is sheer hypocrisy when they say they are going to Jesus; for as a matter of fact they do not come to Him as poor beggars with all their sins. A person whom God has granted grace to see himself crushed and broken, without any comfort anywhere, and looking about him anxiously for consolation, such a one is truly contrite. He must not be warned against going to Jesus, but to him the Gospel must be preached. He must be told not only that he may, but that he should boldly come to Jesus and not imagine that he is coming too soon. If such a person were to die after I had told him that he cannot yet come to Jesus, God would demand the soul of that sinner from me.

One of the principal reasons why many at this point mingle Law and Gospel is that they fail to distinguish the daily repentance of Christians from the repentance which precedes faith. Daily repentance is described in Ps. 51. David calls it a sacrifice which he brings before God and with which God is pleased. He does not speak of repentance which precedes faith, but of that which follows it. The great majority of sincere Christians who have the pure doctrine have a keener experience of repentance after faith than of repentance prior to faith. For, having good preachers, they have been led to Christ in no roundabout way. While they are with Christ, their former self-righteousness may make its appearance again, spite of the fact that it has been shattered for them many a time. God must smite these poor Christians again and again to keep them humble. David's example may serve to illustrate this point. He had come to faith in a moment, but what misery did he have to pass through later! A prophet had spoken to him the word of the Lord, but to his dying day his heart was burdened with anguish, distress, and misery. God had ceased to prosper his undertakings; he met with one misfortune after the other, until God released him by death. But all that time David had contrition together with faith. That is, indeed, a sacrifice with which God is pleased. Contrition of this kind is not a mere effect of the Law, produced by the Law alone, but it is at the same time an operation of the Gospel. By the Gospel the love of God enters a person's heart, and when contrition proceeds from love of God, it is indeed a truly sweet sorrow, acceptable to God. God is pleased with it; for we cannot accord Him greater honor than by casting ourselves in the dust before Him and confessing: "Thou art righteous,

O Lord, but I am a poor sinner. Have mercy upon me for the sake of Jesus Christ."

Let me submit a testimony from the *Smalcald Articles,* Part III, Art. III (Mueller, pp. 312—314; *Trigl. Conc.*, pp. 479—488). It is a precious passage, one of the gems in our Confessions. For the true doctrine of contrition is not found in any of the sects, but only in our Lutheran Church, and it is laid down in this passage. Luther, you know, wrote the Smalcald Articles himself; we bless him even in his grave for having bequeathed to us this heritage. He says: —

"This office [of the Law] the New Testament retains and urges, as St. Paul, Rom. 1, 18, does, saying: 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men'; again, 3, 19: 'All the world is guilty before God. No man is righteous before Him.' And Christ says, John 16, 8: 'The Holy Ghost will reprove the world of sin.'

"This, then, is the thunderbolt of God by which He hurls to the ground both manifest sinners and false saints and suffers no one to be in the right, but drives them all together to terror and despair. This is the hammer, as Jeremiah says, 23, 29: 'Is not My Word like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' This is not *activa contritio,* or manufactured repentance, but *passiva contritio,* true sorrow of heart, suffering and sensation of death. [Manufactured repentance is nothing else than acting as though you were penitent.]

"This, then, is what it means to begin true repentance; and here man must hear such a sentence as this: You are all of no account, whether you be manifest sinners or saints (in your own opinion); you all must become different and do otherwise than you are now doing, no matter whether you are as great, wise, powerful, and holy as you may. Here no one is godly, etc.

"But to this office the New Testament immediately adds the consolatory promise of grace through the Gospel, which must be believed, as Christ declares, Mark 1, 15: 'Repent ye and believe the Gospel'; *i. e.*, become different and do otherwise and believe My promise. And John, preceding Him, is called a preacher of repentance, however, for the remission of sins; *i. e.*, John was to accuse all and convict them of being sinners that they might know what they were before God and might acknowledge that they were lost men and might thus be prepared for the Lord to receive grace and to expect and accept from Him the remission of sins. Thus

also Christ Himself says, Luke 24, 47: 'Repentance and remission of sins must be preached in My name among all nations.'

"But whenever the Law alone, without the Gospel's being added, exercises this its office, there is nothing else than death and hell, and man must despair, like Saul and Judas; as St. Paul, Rom. 7, 10, says: 'Through sin the Law killeth.' On the other hand, the Gospel brings consolation and remission, not only in one way, but through the Word and Sacraments, and the like, as we shall hear afterward, in order that there is thus with the Lord plenteous redemption, as Ps. 130, 7 says, against the dreadful captivity of sin.

"However, we must now contrast the false repentance of the Sophists with true repentance in order that both may be the better understood.

"It was impossible that they should teach correctly concerning repentance, since they did not know the real sins. For, as has been shown above, they do not believe aright concerning original sin, but say that the natural powers of man have remained unimpaired and incorrupt; that reason can teach aright and the will can in accordance therewith do aright; that God certainly bestows His grace when a man does as much as is in him, according to his free will.

"It had to follow thence that they did penance only for actual sins, such as wicked thoughts to which a person yields (for according to them wicked emotions, lust, and improper dispositions are not sins), and for wicked words and wicked deeds, which free will could readily have omitted.

"And of such repentance they fix three parts: contrition, confession, and satisfaction, with this magnificent consolation and promise added: If man truly repent, confess, render satisfaction, he thereby would have merited forgiveness and paid for his sins before God. Thus in repentance they instructed men to repose confidence in their own works. Hence the expression originated, which was employed in the pulpit when public absolution was announced to the people: 'Prolong, O God, my life, until I shall make satisfaction for my sins and amend my life.'

"There was here no mention of Christ nor faith; but men hoped by their own works to overcome and blot out sins before God. And with this intention we became priests and monks, that we might array ourselves against sin.

"As to contrition, this is the way it was done: Since no one could remember all his sins (especially as committed through an

entire year), they inserted this provision, namely, that if an unknown sin should be remembered late, this also must be repented of and confessed, etc."

Some went to Communion only once a year. They found out that they could not enumerate every sin which they had committed every day of the year. The priest would tell them that they must confess their unconfessed sins whenever they remembered them, if his absolution was to be of benefit to them.

"Meanwhile they were commended to the grace of God."

This meant that their absolution actually was not yet in force; it would be in force whenever they made up what they were still in arrears regarding their confession. "To be commended to the grace of God" meant, for instance, that, if the person were to die the next day, it would not be probable that he had gone to hell, but it could not be stated definitely whether he had gone to hell or into purgatory.

"Moreover, since no one could know how great the contrition ought to be in order to be sufficient before God, they gave this consolation: He who could not have contrition, at least ought to have attrition, which I might call half a contrition or the beginning of contrition; for they have themselves understood neither of these terms, nor do they understand them now, as little as I. Such attrition was reckoned as contrition when a person came to confession."

Luther means to say: What they meant by attrition I do not know; but with them it was a sufficient contrition.

"And when it happened that any one said that he could not have contrition nor lament his sins (as might have occurred in illicit love or the desire for revenge, etc.), they asked whether he did not wish or desire to have contrition. When one would reply, Yes (for who, save the devil himself, would say no to such a question?), they accepted this as contrition and forgave him his sins on account of this good work of his. Here they cited the example of St. Bernard, etc."

Ask a Roman Catholic priest or any true Catholic, and if he is sincere, he will admit that this practise still prevails in the Roman Church, that persons admit in the confessional they would like to have contrition, but when they think of their fornication, they feel they would like to continue that; likewise, they would like to inflict harm on their enemy. The papistic religion surely is a religion to make one shudder when its true inwardness is understood.

"Here we see how blind reason, in matters pertaining to God, gropes about and, according to its own imagination, seeks consolation in its own works and cannot think of Christ and faith. But if it be viewed in the light, this contrition is a manufactured and fictitious thought, derived from man's own powers, without faith and without knowledge of Christ. And in it the poor sinner, when he reflected upon his own lust and desire for revenge, would sometimes have laughed rather than wept, except such as either had been truly struck by the Law or had been vainly vexed by the devil with a sorrowful spirit. Otherwise such contrition was certainly mere hypocrisy and did not mortify the lust for sins; for they had to grieve, while they would rather have continued to sin, if it had been free to them."

The decrees of the Council of Trent prove that Luther has correctly depicted the Papacy. When he wrote these words, he undoubtedly remembered his own life among the papists. When engaged in his penitential exercises, he certainly did not feel like laughing. He took it so seriously, and he was filled with dread to such an extent that he sometimes swooned away in sheer terror during these penances. You know that at one time he locked himself into his cell for several days in order to do penance. When his convent brethren forced the door open, they found him unconscious, so great had been the anguish of his soul. They roused him with music. That is one reason why Luther esteemed music so highly: he had felt the powerful effect which music has on the minds of men.

TWENTY-FOURTH EVENING LECTURE.

(April 10, 1885.)

About one hundred twenty years ago Rationalism had become dominant in the so-called Protestant Church of Germany. It was at the time of the deepest ignominy and humiliation that the nation had ever passed through when defection from the Gospel had become complete. The shallowest minds, the most brainless men, without any considerable learning, were regarded as great lights and far ahead of their age. For theologians to achieve some renown, all that was necessary was sufficient boldness, or rather audacity, to declare the mysterious doctrines of Christianity errors of former dark ages, which had been without enlightenment, and to treat the doctrine of God, virtue, and immortality as the real kernel of the Christian religion. During this awful time matters

finally came to such a pass that rationalistic preachers, to counteract the idea that they were superfluous in this world and to prove their usefulness, would treat from their pulpits subjects like these: Intelligent Agriculture; Profitableness of Potato-raising; Tree-planting a Necessity; Importance of Genuine Sanitation; etc. Rationalistic books of sermons in which subjects of this description are treated with grand pathos will show you that I am not slandering the rationalists of that age.

Some rationalists were ashamed of these typical products of the school of Rationalism. In 1772 a book was published which bore the title *Of the Usefulness of the Ministry, Written for the Consolation of My Colleagues.* The author was Joachim Spalding, a writer of some renown in his day. In his book he states that subjects like those that I mentioned are indeed not proper subjects for pulpit efforts. He submits his own opinion, to this effect: If sermons are to be useful, the preacher must never speak of the doctrines of faith first because they only serve to confuse people's minds, but he must present exclusively practical ethical lessons. It is not surprising, then, that in those days many souls whose hearts were agitated by the question, What must I do to be saved? quit our devastated Church and either sought refuge with the sect of the Moravians or even turned to the spurious Church of Rome.

Praise and thanks be to God that those awful times are past, — let us hope forever! After the successful termination of the so-called Wars of Deliverance from that monster Napoleon I, something like the breath of a new spiritual spring passes over Germany. Multitudes experienced a truly marvelous quickening from the deadly sleep in rationalistic unbelief, and among them were not a few ministers. Since then many preachers began to discard the vapid, pagan morality of rationalism and to preach Christ and faith in Him as the only way to salvation hereafter and to true peace of heart in the present life. However, it is an undeniable fact that even well-intentioned preachers are mingling Law and Gospel and thus inflict horrible injury on their hearers. May God, by His grace, preserve you from this danger when you come into your future congregation, with which you are one day to appear before the throne of God to give an account whether you have been a faithful watchman over the souls entrusted to you and have broken to them the Bread of Life, or whether you have given them unwholesome, noxious food, which caused their souls to sicken or even to die. May the study of our thirteenth thesis help in equipping you for your future work!

Thesis XIII.

In the ninth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when one makes an appeal to believe in a manner as if a person could make himself believe or at least help toward that end, instead of preaching faith into a person's heart by laying the Gospel promises before him.

This thesis does not score as an error the demand on the part of the pastor, be it ever so urgent, that his hearers believe the Gospel. That demand has been made by all the prophets, all the apostles, yea, by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. When demanding faith, we do not lay down a demand of the Law, but issue the sweetest invitation, practically saying to our hearers: "Come; for all things are now ready." Luke 14, 17. When I invite a half-starved person to sit down to a well-furnished board and to help himself to anything he likes, I do not expect him to tell me that he will take no orders from me. Even so the demand to believe is to be understood not as an order of the Law, but as an invitation of the Gospel.

The error against which this thesis is directed is this, that man can produce faith in himself. Such a demand would be an order of the Law and turn faith into a work of man. That would be plainly mingling Law and Gospel. A preacher must be able to preach a sermon on faith without ever using the term *faith*. It is not important that he din the word *faith* into the ears of his audience, but it is necessary for him to frame his address so as to arouse in every poor sinner the desire to lay the burden of his sins at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ and say to Him: "Thou art mine, and I am Thine."

Here is where Luther reveals his true greatness. He rarely appeals to his hearers to believe, but he preaches concerning the work of Christ, salvation by grace, and the riches of God's mercy in Jesus Christ in such a manner that the hearers get the impression that all they have to do is to take what is being offered them and find a resting-place in the lap of divine grace. That is the great act which you must seek to learn — to make your hearers reason that, if what you preach is true, they are blessed men; all their anguish and unrest has been useless; they have been redeemed perfectly, reconciled with God, and are numbered with the saved and those on whom God has made His gracious countenance to shine. The moment a person thinks these thoughts, he attains to faith.

Suppose you were picturing to a horde of Indians the Lord Jesus, telling them that He is the Son of God who came down from heaven to redeem men from their sins by taking the wrath of God upon Himself, overcoming death, devil, and hell in their stead and opening heaven to all men, and that every man can now be saved by merely accepting what our Lord Jesus Christ has brought to us. Suppose that you were suddenly struck down by the deadly bullet of a hostile Indian lying in ambush. It is possible that, dying, you would leave behind you a small congregation of Indians though you may not even once have pronounced the word *faith* to them. For every one in that audience who did not wantonly and wilfully resist divine grace would have to reason that he, too, has been redeemed.

On the other hand, you may spend a lot of time telling men that they must believe if they wish to be saved, and your hearers may get the impression that something is required of them which they must do. They will begin to worry whether they will be able to do it, and when they have tried to do it, whether it is exactly the thing that is required of them. Thus you may have preached a great deal about faith without delivering a real sermon on faith. Any one who has come to understand that it is up to him to accept what is offered him and actually accepts it, has faith. To be saved by faith means to acquiesce in God's plan of salvation by simply accepting it.

I do not mean to say that you must not preach about faith. Our time particularly lacks a proper understanding of this matter. The best preachers imagine they have accomplished a great deal when they have rammed into their hearers the axiom: "Faith alone saves." But by their preaching they have merely made their hearers sigh: "Oh, that I had faith! Faith must be something very difficult; for I have not obtained it." These unfortunate hearers will go home from church with a sad heart. The word *faith* is echoing in their ears, but gives them no comfort. Even Luther complained that many in his day were preaching about faith without showing their hearers what faith really signifies and how to attain it. A preacher of this sort may labor for years and preach to a dead congregation. That explains why people talk in uncertain strains about their salvation. You can tell that they are driven to and fro with doubts and become awfully frightened and distressed when they are told that they are at death's door. Whose fault is it? The preacher's, because he preached wrong about faith.

To say that faith is required for salvation is not saying that man can produce faith himself. Scripture requires of man everything; every commandment is a demand crying: "Do this, and thou shalt live." Scripture demands that we "purify our hearts." Jas. 4, 8. We are told: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. 5, 14. The mere issuing of such demands does not prove that man can comply with them. An old and true maxim runs thus: *A debito ad posse not valet consequentia.* (No valid conclusion can be drawn from an obligation to the ability to meet it.) When a creditor demands payment, that does not prove that the debtor can pay. In ordinary daily life a creditor, knowing his debtor's insolvency, may demand payment of a debt merely because he has observed that the debtor is a shiftless person and, moreover, full of vanity and conceit. The creditor's object in making the demand is to get the debtor to quit his proud demeanor and to humble him. God deals with men the same way. By serving notice on me that I owe Him obedience to all His commandments, God leads me to realize that, even though I put forth my utmost endeavor, I cannot meet my obligations. Having humbled me, He then approaches me with His Gospel. This humbling of the natural heart is what is lacking in modern preaching. When a person says to a preacher: "Oh, but I cannot believe," he is told: "O yes, you can; you must only have the earnest desire to believe. You can get rid of your sins; all you need do is to strive against them." That is an abominable way to preach.

Alas; the synergists have put poison in the Gospel, denied the Lord Christ, and made His grace to be of none effect. Let me submit a few statements which reveal the synergism of Melanchthon. Modern theologians ought to be interested in these statements. Some who know them declare these very statements the good part in Melanchthon's teaching. Orthodox Lutherans, however, decline to accept them.

Leonhard Hutter, the well-known orthodox theologian, wrote a book entitled *Concordia Concors.* It is a history of the Formula of Concord, showing what occasioned the writing of each article of this Confession of our Church. From it we see, among other things, that Melanchthon's teaching was the cause why Article II was inserted in the Formula of Concord. As evidence, Hutter cites false statements that are found in Melanchthon's writings. I am presenting these statements in order to show that it is not only we

Missourians who, with our rigorous minds, are scenting synergism everywhere.

Melanchthon taught: 1. "There is, and must be, a reason in men why some are predestinated unto salvation while others are reprobated and damned."

This statement Hutter pronounces synergistic. Compare with this statement the publications of our opponents in the predestinarian controversy, and you will find that they are saying the same thing as Melanchthon, thereby proving that they are crass synergists, — for such Melanchthon was. The wrong part in Melanchthon's statement is not the assertion that there must be a cause in man why he is reprobated and damned, but that there must be a cause in some men why they are predestinated unto salvation. There is no such cause in any person. All the saints in heaven will proclaim with heartfelt thanks that they have contributed nothing towards bringing themselves into heaven; that they have not been a cause of their own salvation; that there was sufficient cause in them why they should be in hell, but none why they should be in heaven.

Again, Melanchthon says: 2. "Since the promises of grace are universal and there cannot be contradictory wills in God, there must necessarily be some cause in us that accounts for the salvation of some and of the reprobation of others; in other words, there must be in each a different kind of action."

The different kind of action is not the cause why any person finds himself in heaven. True, grace is universal. The reason why some are reprobated is that they wilfully resist grace. Here reason enters in with the claim that accordingly there must be a cause in the others why they are saved, and this must be because they did not resist grace. But we are at this point confronted with an inscrutable mystery, and any one who is unwilling to acknowledge this mystery is abandoning the Christian religion, the central teaching of which is that God has revealed to man a way of salvation which no man's reason could have discovered nor is able to comprehend. When this plan of God for our salvation is presented to us, we are forced to exclaim with the Apostle Paul: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counselor, or who hath first given to Him and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things; to whom be glory forever." Rom. 11, 33—36.

Again, Melanchthon says: 3. "The cause lies in men why some give their assent to the promises of grace while others do not."

This is crass synergism; for Melanchthon refers to a real cause, to what is termed a causating or impelling cause (*causa causans*). How can his assertion stand over against the truth that we are all by nature dead in sins and that we become new creatures in regeneration?

Lastly Melanchthon states: 4. "Three causes concur in a person's conversion: the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father and the Son send to quicken our hearts, and the will of man, which gives assent to the Word of God and does not resist."

Man's faith comes under the same ruling as his contrition. I may sit down in a corner and indulge in melancholy thoughts in order to coax contrition out of myself; but I fail. If I am sincere, I am forced to admit my inability. While I imagine that my heart has been softened and I am repenting of my sin, I suddenly feel in me a craving for the very sin of which I have repented. If genuine contrition is to be produced in me, the thunders of the Law must roll over my head, and the lightnings of Sinai must strike my heart. The same holds good with regard to faith — I cannot produce it myself.

Let me submit one more citation, which Hutter has not quoted, but which is cognate to our subject. It is taken from Melanchthon's *Loci* (Chapters in Theology) of the year 1552. On page 101 Melanchthon writes: "You say you are unable to obey the voice of the Gospel, to listen to the Son of God, and to accept Him as your Mediator?" This question Melanchthon answers: "Of course you can!" An awful answer, this! When a parishioner comes to you complaining of his inability to believe, you must tell him that you are not surprised at his statement; for no man can; he would be a marvel if he could. And you must instruct him to do nothing but listen to the Word of God, and God will give him faith. Furthermore, you may admonish him not to resist divine grace and not to extinguish the sparks which are beginning to glow in his heart. But your telling him these things does not give him the strength he needs. When the Gospel enters his heart like a blessed water of life from heaven, faith is kindled there. It is at first feeble like a new-born babe, which sees, hears, tastes, moves, has a certain amount of strength, and can eat and drink. Not until this has taken place, may you urge the person to cooperate with divine grace. We do not by any means reject cooperation on the

part of man *after* his regeneration; we rather urge it upon him lest he die again and incur the danger of being lost forever.

Melanchthon continues: "Raise yourself up by means of the Gospel, ask God to help you and to let the Holy Spirit make the consolations of the Gospel effective in you. You must understand that the grace of God proposes to convert us in this manner, *viz.*, that, having been quickened by His promise, we wrestle with ourselves, call upon Him, and fight against our unbelief and other evil inclinations."

Again, he says: "Free will in man is the ability to prepare oneself for grace" (*facultas se applicandi ad gratiam*). This is the notorious statement which is usually cited to prove that Melanchthon was a genuine synergist. The foregoing awful statements prove it indeed.

Lastly, Melanchthon says: "What I mean is this: man hears the promise, makes an attempt to give his assent to it, and puts sins against his conscience aside." This is wrong; before a person is able to put aside sins against his conscience, he must be converted.

TWENTY-FIFTH EVENING LECTURE.

(April 24, 1885.)

Manifold are the difficult and arduous tasks of a minister of Jesus Christ; but the most difficult and arduous of all, beyond question, is the task of proclaiming the pure doctrine of the Gospel of Christ and at the same time exposing, refuting, and rejecting teachings that are contrary to the Gospel. The minister who does this will discover by practical experience the truth of the old saying: *Veritas odium parit* (telling the truth makes enemies).

If faithful Athanasius in his day had been content to proclaim his doctrine that Jesus Christ is true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary; if he had not at the same time vigorously attacked Arius and the Arians, who denied this doctrine, he would undoubtedly have finished his life in honor and pleasant peace, for he was a highly gifted man. Had Luther followed the example of Staupitz of quietly teaching the pure Gospel to his brother monks without at the same time attacking the abominations of the Papacy with great earnestness, not a finger would have been raised against him. For even before Luther's day there had been monks who had come to understand

the Gospel and made no secret of their knowledge; but they did not come out in public to fight against the errors of the Papacy. Accordingly they were allowed to live in peace and quiet as long as they held to the cardinal point in the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church — the Pope.

Worldly men and all false Christians cannot but attack those who teach a faith and doctrine different from theirs and to regard them as disturbers of the peace, as peace-hating, quarrelsome, and malicious men. These unfortunate people have no idea of the blindness which enshrouds them; they do not know how gladly the boldest champions of Christ would have kept peace with all men, how much they would have preferred to keep silent, how hard it was for their flesh and blood to come out in public and become targets for the hatred, enmity, vilification, scorn, and persecution of men. However, they could not but confess the truth and at the same time oppose error. Their conscience constrained them to do this because such conduct was required of them by the Word of God.

They remembered that Jesus Christ had said to His disciples, not only: "Ye are the light of the world," but also: "Ye are the salt of the earth"; that is, you are not only to proclaim the truth, but you are also to salt the world with its sins and errors; you are to sprinkle sharp salt on the world to stay its corruption. They remembered that Christ had distinctly said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." Matt. 10, 34. Not as though the Lord took pleasure in peace-destroying wars; not as though He had come into the world to start dissensions and discord among men; but He means to say: "My doctrine is of such a nature that, if it is properly proclaimed, thetically and antithetically, peace among men cannot possibly be preserved. For as soon as My Word is proclaimed, men will divide into two camps: some will receive it with joy, others will be offended by it and will begin to hate and persecute those who receive it.

Moreover, preachers of the right character remember that the Church is not a kingdom that can be built up in peace; for it is located within the domain of the devil, who is the prince of this world. Accordingly, the Church has no choice but to be at war. It is *ecclesia militans,* the Church Militant, and will remain such until the blessed end. Wherever a Church is seen to be, not *ecclesia militans,* but *ecclesia quiescens,* a Church at ease, that — you may rely on it! — is a false Church.

Moreover, an honest preacher knows that he is also a pastor, *i. e.,* a shepherd. Of what use, however, is a shepherd who leads the sheep to good pasture-grounds, but flees when he sees the wolf coming? The occasion that is to test his caliber is when he must go to meet the wolf that wants to devour the sheep. That means to fight for the kingdom of God.

Lastly, an honest preacher knows that he is to be a regular sower of seed. Of what use is it for him to sow good seed and then to look on while another sows the tares of false doctrine among his wheat? Soon the tares will outstrip the wheat and choke it.

Keep these facts stored up in your memory, my dear friends. If you wish to be faithful ministers of Christ, you cannot possibly become such without striving and fighting against false doctrines, a false gospel, and false belief. In the view of worldly men your lot will not be particularly enviable. Even wise Sirach says: "If thou comest to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation." He means to say: It is impossible for you to escape affliction if you wish to be a faithful servant of God. Any one who is without affliction may be ever so zealous in the discharge of the duties of his office, his zeal is nevertheless not of the right sort. Where there is genuine zeal, there not only planting, not only building, is going on, but the workmen also have the sword girded about them and are going out to wage the wars of the Lord. Let this be your slogan: —

Here men's scorn and frown,
Yonder glory's crown;
Here I'm hoping and believing,
There I'm having and perceiving;
For we reach our crown
Through men's scorn and frown.

Let this slogan be at the same time your comfort. For, as I have said, your cause will be spurned as an evil one, unless you connive at any contrary view that may be expressed in opposition to your teaching. But your cause will shine with all the greater luster in heaven. On the Last Day, God will say to you: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matt. 25, 21. Then will come the times of your refreshing, when you will have quit this wicked world and the association of false Christians, who have shamefully vilified your best endeavors, calling them the worst abominations. Then your Lord Jesus will say to you: "Well done! You were right; you did not look for ease and comfort; you only strove faithfully to keep what was entrusted to you."

But remember in this connection that errors are the more harmful, the more they are concealed. It is therefore necessary that they be dragged into the light and fought. Of this duty we are reminded by our

Thesis XIV.

In the tenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when faith is required as a condition of justification and salvation, as if a person were righteous in the sight of God and saved, not only by faith, but also on account of his faith, for the sake of his faith, and in view of his faith.

There are not a few people who imagine that a minister who constantly preaches that man is made righteous in the sight of God and saved by faith is manifestly a genuine evangelical preacher. For what else is to be required of him when everybody knows that salvation by faith is the marrow and essence of the Gospel and the entire Word of God? That is true. A minister who preaches that doctrine is certainly a genuine evangelical preacher. But that fact is not established merely from his use of these words: "Man is made righteous in the sight of God and saved by faith alone," but from the proper sense that must be connected with these words. The preacher must mean by faith what Scripture means when it employs that term. But here is where many preachers are at fault. By faith they understand something different from what the prophets, the apostles, and our Lord and Savior understood by faith. I pass by the rationalists, who used to preach that man is indeed saved by faith; but by faith in Jesus Christ they understand nothing else than the acceptance of the excellent moral teachings which Christ proclaimed. By accepting these moral teachings, they held, a person becomes a true disciple of the Lord and is made righteous and saved. Take up any rationalistic book of the radical type that was published in the age of Rationalism, and you will see that such was the preaching of vulgar Rationalism.

Nor are the papists averse to saying that faith makes a person righteous in the sight of God and saves him. In an emergency they will even say that faith alone makes a person righteous and saves him. But by faith they understand *fides formata,* faith that is joined with love. Accordingly, they manage to say many excellent things about faith; but by faith they always mean something different from what Scripture teaches concerning faith.

Moreover, in the postils and devotional writings of all modern theologians you may find the doctrine that man is made righteous in the sight of God and saved by faith. But by faith they under-

stand nothing but what man himself achieves and produces. Their faith is a product of human energy and resolution. Such teaching, however, subverts the entire Gospel.

What God's Word really means when it says that man is justified and saved by faith alone is nothing else than this: Man is *not saved by his own acts,* but *solely* by the doing and dying of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the whole world. Over against this teaching modern theologians assert that in the salvation of man two kinds of activity must be noted: in the first place, there is something that God must do. His part is the most difficult, for He must accomplish the task of redeeming men. But in the second place, something is required that man must do. For it will not do to admit persons to heaven, after they have been redeemed, without further parley. Man must do something really great — he has to believe. This teaching overthrows the Gospel completely. It is a pity that many beautiful sermons of modern theologians ultimately reveal the fact that they mean something entirely different from the plain and clear teaching of Scripture that man is saved, not by what he himself does or achieves, but by what God does and achieves.

Hear, for instance, a statement from *Luthardt,* in his *Compend of Theology,* p. 202: "On the other hand, repentance and faith are *required of man as that part which he is to render: μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε — at every stage of the history of salvation.* The requirement of repentance can be met immediately by the person who is called by grace, Ps. 95, 7; Heb. 4, 7 ff., while *faith is a free act of obedience which man renders.*"

Note the term "renders"; it refers to the fulfilment of a duty for which a person expects a reward. But faith is not an achievement of man. If it were, it would meet a condition which God had proposed to man; as if God had said: "I have done My share; now you must do yours. I do not ask much of you, but I do require that you repent and believe." Now, can you consider anything a present that is handed you on condition that you do something for it? No; it ceases to be a present when the donor stipulates one condition or another which the grantee must meet. Here in our country many donations are not valid; accordingly, to make a legally valid donation of something quite valuable, the donor will state that he has received one dollar for it. This is done in bills of sale by which property worth millions of dollars is conveyed. It is a circumvention of the law, which plainly shows the essential difference between giving and selling.

Believing the Gospel would be, in truth, an immeasurably great and difficult task for us if God were not to accomplish it in us. But suppose it were not so exceedingly great and difficult; even if it were an easy condition that God had proposed to us for our salvation, our salvation would not be a gift; God would not have *given us His Son,* but merely offered Him to us with a certain stipulation. That has not been God's way. The Apostle Paul says: "Being justified freely (*δωρεάν*) by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. 3, 24. We are justified *δωρεάν,* that is gratuitously, without anything, even the least thing, being required of us. Accordingly, we poor sinners praise God for the place of refuge He has prepared for us, where we can flee even when we have to come to Him as utterly lost, insolvent beggars, who have not the least ability to offer to God something that they have achieved. All that we can offer Him is our sins, nothing else. But for that very reason Jesus regards us as His proper clients. We honor Him as our faithful Savior by making His Gospel our refuge; but we deny Him if we come to Him offering Him something for what He gives us. In view of the statement of Peter: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," Acts 4, 12, you must regard it as an awful perversion of the Gospel to treat the command to believe as a condition of man's justification and salvation.

Suppose you say to a beggar who approaches you asking alms that you will give him something on one condition, and on his asking you what the condition is, you would tell him the condition is that he accept your gift. Would he not consider your condition a hoax and say, laughing: "Why, most gladly I shall meet your condition, and the more you give, the greater will become my joy in taking it"? True, if a person refuses to believe, nobody can help him. But he must not say that grace was offered with a condition attached to it which he could not meet. God attaches no condition to His grace when He proffers it to a sinner and asks him to accept it. It would be no gift if He were to attach a condition, just as little as it is a gift when I ask a tramp to work in my garden if he wants me to give him something to eat. Such a person I treat in accordance with 2 Thess. 3, 10: "If any would not work, neither should he eat," and thus keep him from vagrancy. You see, then, what a perversion of the Gospel it is to treat faith as a condition of salvation.

Our recent predestinarian controversy shows how easy it is to err in this matter. Our adversaries stumble at our doctrine that God has not foreseen anything in the elect that could have prompted Him to elect them, but that His election is one of unconstrained mercy. They are shocked because, in accordance with the Formula of Concord, we teach that there are only two causes of salvation, namely, the mercy of God and the merit of Christ. They imagine that God is partial, saying He elects some and neglects others, reprobating them. This is an inference which they draw, and it is one for which they deserve no commendation. Instead of trying to save God from the charge of partiality by assuming a difference in the person whom He elects when compared with the others, they should consider that man is justified and saved *by* faith, not *on account of* faith. Our old theologians have said that people who charge God with being partial deserve to be whipped.

The German theologians come out more boldly with their opinion, while our adversaries here in America are more wary. The latter adhere to the formula *intuitu fidei* of the old dogmaticians and say that God elected men "in view of their faith." They seek shelter behind the old dogmaticians; but their stratagem is futile, because they use the formula in a sense different from that in which the old dogmaticians employed it. Our adversaries state plainly that God has decreed to elect certain men in view of their *conduct*, or they use similar terms. Turn and twist as much as they will, they declare that something which man does is the cause of his salvation. If John Gerhard and Egidius Hunnius were to rise from the dead and see that our adversaries in the present controversy on predestination appeal to them as their authorities, they would be amazed; for it can be plainly shown that they have rejected and abominated the doctrine of our adversaries.

John Gerhard, in his *Chapters in Theology,* writes (*Locus de Evang.*, § 26): "We hold that the Law differs from the Gospel, in the third place, as regards the promises. Those of the Law are conditioned, for they stipulate perfect obedience and demand perfect obedience as the condition of their realization. . . . Lev. 18, 5: 'Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them.' But the promises of the Gospel are gratuitous and are offered as gifts (*donative*). Accordingly, the Gospel is called the word of God's grace, and Rom. 4, 16 states: 'Therefore it [righteousness] is of faith that it might be by grace.'"

This citation shows the reason why this thesis was embodied in the present series. A person teaching that "faith is a condition

which the Gospel stipulates" makes the promises of the Gospel conditioned promises like those of the Law and removes the distinction between the Law and the Gospel. The Law promises no good thing except on condition that a person comply perfectly with its demands, while the Gospel promises everything unconditionally as a free gift. In short, the promises of grace demand nothing of man. When the Lord says, "Believe," He does not utter a demand, but issues an urgent invitation to man to take, to apprehend, to appropriate what He is giving, without asking anything in return for it. The gift must, of course, be accepted. Non-acceptance forfeits the gift, but not because there was a condition attached to it.

Again, *Gerhard* says: "Faith is not placed in opposition to grace, even as the beggar's act of accepting a gift is not placed in opposition to the free bounty of the giver." A beggar would be insane if he were to say to the donor: "What? I am still to do the accepting?" and would be told to be gone with his silliness.

Gerhard continues: "The term 'if' is either etiological or syllogistic; that is, it signifies either a cause or a consequence. In the preaching of the Law the statement: 'If you do this, you shall live,' the term is etiological; it signifies the cause, or reason; for obedience is the reason why eternal life is given to those who keep the Law. But in evangelical promises the term 'if' is syllogistic; it signifies a consequence; for it relates to the mode of application which God has appointed for these promises, and that is faith alone."

If faith is called an achievement of man, the demand for it makes faith a condition that man must meet by his own effort. That is the reason why the aforementioned error of Luthardt is so great; it vitiates his entire theology.

Adam Osiander, in his *Collegium Theologicum*, tom. V, 140, writes: "Faith does not justify in so far as it is obedience in compliance with a command, — for thus viewed, it is an action, a work, and something required by Law, — but only *in so far as it receives* and is attached to justification after the manner of a passive instrument."

This citation shows again that our thesis belongs in this series on the distinction between the Law and the Gospel. If faith is obedience, it is a work of the Law, and the Apostle Paul was altogether wrong when he declared that a person is justified without the deeds of the Law, by faith alone. However, it is not he that is wrong, but the modern theologians. Faith is merely a passive instrument, like a hand into which some one places a dollar. The

person receives the dollar provided he does not withdraw his hand; beyond that he does not have to do anything. The donor is doing the essential part by putting the gift into the hand, not the other party, by holding out the hand. Let a beggar approach a miser and see what his holding out of the hand to him will help him; the miser may set his dogs upon him if he annoys him too much.

To cite *Gerhard* once more, he writes (*Loc. de justific.*, § 179): "It is one thing to be justified *on account of* faith and another to be justified *by* faith. In the former view, faith is the meritorious, in the latter, the instrumental cause. [There must be an organ by which I come into the possession and enjoyment of what some one offers me.] We are not justified on account of faith as a merit, but by faith which lays hold of the merit of Christ." It is not my own merit that saves me, but the merit of Christ.

However, as regards the simile that has been adduced, the old axiom must be noted: *Omne simile est dissimile* (In every simile there is some element of dissimilarity). Otherwise it would not be a simile, but identity. When I hold out my hand, I make a motion. This point must not be pressed in the case of man's faith. For it is God who prompts the holding out of the hand after He has prepared a sinner for the Gospel by means of the Law. Of course, God cannot prompt a person who continues, and is determined to continue, in his sinful life and makes a mockery of God's Word.

John Olearius, who completed that splendid treatise of Carpzov, *Isagoge. in Libros Symbolicos* (Introduction to the Symbolical Books), says (p. 1361): "In relation to salvation, faith is *not our work,* but it belongs to the order of salvation which God has laid down, and for this reason it is *not by any means a condition in the proper sense of the term,* depending on man, but it is a blessing from our Father in heaven, or a requisite which is furnished to a person who merely suffers it to be furnished him, or an instrument which lays hold of salvation. It is in no way the active cause that proceeds from man and has an influence, after the manner of a cause properly so called, in bringing about a person's salvation." Remember this well: In a certain sense it might be said that faith is man's work, because it is not God that believes, but man. However, this is liable to be misunderstood, and therefore we should not speak thus. Faith is not an achievement of ours, but is wrought in us by God without our contributing anything towards that end.

The old dogmaticians built up their dogmatic treatises by the causal method, considering everything from the viewpoint of a cause. It was a dangerous method. When they came to the element of faith, they were perplexed about what kind of cause to call it and hit upon the term *causa instrumentalis*, instrumental, or organic, cause. Now, you may run through the whole Bible, and you will not find a single passage which states that man is justified *on account of* his faith. Wherever the relation of faith to justification is spoken of, terms are used which declare faith a means, not a cause. That is evidence sufficient to show what the Bible doctrine on this point is. You will either have to put the Bible aside and choose a different calling, or if you must enter the ministry because God constrains you, this is what you will have to teach concerning faith in strict accordance with God's Word.

The excellent Wurttemberg theologian *Heerbrand* wrote a compend of theology that was even translated into Greek and sent to the Patriarch of Constantinople. He says: "Faith is not a condition, nor is it, properly speaking, required as a condition, because justification is not promised and offered on account of the worth or meritoriousness of faith or in as far as faith is a work. For faith, too, is imperfect; however, it is a mode of receiving the blessing offered men through and on account of Christ." Now, it would be silly to call faith a condition nevertheless; for, says Heerbrand, "the hand is not called the condition, but the organ and instrument, for receiving alms."

To conclude, *Calov*, in his *Biblia Illustrata*, commenting on Rom. 5, 10, says: "We have not been redeemed and reconciled, nor have our sins been atoned for, under a condition, but we have been absolutely redeemed in the most perfect and complete manner, as far as merit and efficacy of the act are concerned; although, as regards the actual enjoyment and appropriation of salvation, faith is necessary, which is nothing else than the appropriation of the atonement, satisfaction, and reconciliation of Christ; for, in the judgment of God, if One died for all, it is the same as if all had died. 2 Cor. 5, 14. This is a golden text, which shines with the radiance of the sun even in the luminous Scriptures. Since the death which Christ died for all is a death for the purpose of reconciliation, it is the same as if all had suffered death for this purpose. It follows, then, that, without entertaining the least doubt, I can say with perfect assurance: *I am* redeemed; *I am* reconciled; salvation *has been* acquired *for me*."

TWENTY-SIXTH EVENING LECTURE.

(May 1, 1885.)

In order to be a true Christian genuine faith is an indispensable requisite. However, in order to be a true minister, genuine faith is not sufficient, but there must be, in addition to faith, the ability to express in proper terms the things that must be believed. Accordingly, the holy Apostle Paul enjoins upon his assistant Timothy with great earnestness this duty: "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 1, 13. It is indeed indispensable for a minister to have genuine faith in his heart and to guard well this mystery of faith in his heart; however, it is equally indispensable that he present the true faith in "sound words," as the apostle expresses it, that is, in clear, plain, unmistakable, and adequate terms. This is a warning to be heeded particularly by those young theologians who were not reared in the sound words of faith as Timothy was, according to the report of the Apostle Paul; who did not from a child hear the true doctrine, but, instead, heard the teaching of rationalistic preachers or of believing preachers of the modern type. Some erroneous expression that is fundamentally wrong may have stuck in their memory, and they will probably make use of it in their sermons to the great injury of their hearers.

You know that rationalistic preachers refer to repentance and conversion by calling it amending, or reforming, one's life; to sanctification, by calling it walking in the path of virtue; to the anger of God, by calling it the serious purpose of God; to the predestination of God, by calling it men's fate; to the Gospel, by calling it the teaching of Jesus. Any one who has heard these phrases since his childhood days may easily adopt this dangerous rationalistic terminology in his sermons, even if he does not do it because he harbors a wrong belief.

However, even believing theologians of the modern type are frequently too timid to use technical terms that are fully warranted by Biblical and ecclesiastical usage, because they are afraid that these terms might prove offensive to their audience. They are averse to speaking of hereditary sin in their sermons or of the wrath of God against sinners, of the blindness of natural man, of spiritual death, in which all men are merged by nature. They do not like to speak of the devil going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, because that would make them unpopular with

their hearers. They are disinclined to speak of the everlasting fire of hell, of eternal torment and damnation; they prefer to speak of these matters to their hearers in terms that do not seem so strange, faulty, and offensive to them, employing phrases that are more in harmony with "the religious sentiment of an enlightened people."

Now, there is no doubt that these men wish to convert people by using such false terms. They believe that they can convert men by concealing things from them or by presenting matters in a manner that is pleasing to men as they are by nature. They are like sorry physicians who do not like to prescribe a bitter medicine to delicate patients, or if they do prescribe it, they add so much sugar to it that the patient does not taste the bitter medicine, with the result that the effect is spoiled. Accordingly, preachers who do not clearly and plainly proclaim the Gospel, which is offensive to the world, are not faithful in the discharge of their ministry and inflict great injury on men's souls. Instead of advancing Christians in the knowledge of the pure doctrine, they allow them to grope in the dark, nurse false imaginations in them, and speed them on in their false and dangerous path.

The history of the Church shows how dangerous it is when theologians, otherwise reputed as orthodox, use wrong terms, which can easily be misunderstood. As a result, the most abominable heretics, to cover up their errors with a halo of sanctity, have appealed to phrases which men admittedly orthodox have used. These heretics have deprecated being denounced for the use of terms which were accepted without question from men regarded as orthodox. True, the faulty expressions which orthodox teachers used in a right sense are used by these heretics to hide their error. Nevertheless, those who first used these expressions and believed that they were using them in the right sense are not altogether without blame. In the manner aforestated Arius, Nestorius, all the scholastics, etc., appealed to men whose orthodoxy was acknowledged and thus created the impression that they were continuing to teach the doctrine of the old Church and that their opponents must be false teachers.

Bear this in mind, my dear friends, and consider that as ministers of the Gospel it is your duty not only to *believe* as the Church believes, but also to *speak* in harmony with the Christian Church. Accordingly, before you commit your sermons to memory and deliver them to your congregations, you must subject your manuscript to a severe *critique,* to ascertain not only whether

your sermons are according to the analogy of faith, but also whether you have throughout chosen proper terms, lest against your own intention you destroy where you want to build up. This is of the utmost importance. That is the reason why our Church from the very beginning declared that it requires its preachers "not to depart an inch" from its confessions, not to turn aside from the doctrines laid down in them, *non tantum in rebus, sed etiam in phrasibus,* that is, both as regards the matter offered in their sermons and the manner of their teaching.

This is indeed a great task, requiring hard study. However, in three years you can accomplish a great deal. At the close of your theological triennium those of you who have faithfully applied themselves will know — some more, some less — not only what the true doctrine is, but also how it must be presented. The task will be somewhat more difficult to those of you in particular who have had to listen to perverse teachers nearly throughout their youth. They will reveal in their sermons that they have not been brought up in the sound words of faith. Proper terms must be employed, for the Apostle Paul beseeches the entire congregation at Corinth to "speak the same thing." 1 Cor. 1, 10. They are not to use divergent terms when expounding the same doctrine. The apostle adds another important remark: "that ye be perfectly joined together *in the same mind and in the same judgment.*" Teaching the same doctrine is of no avail if it is not done in the same mind and in the same judgment. The United (*unierte*) Church affords a pertinent illustration. Its teachers may speak as we do, but they do not connect the same sense and meaning with the words that we do. These two things, then, are required of you: the same doctrine in the same terms and the same mind and judgment.

In our fifteenth thesis we are taking up the study of an instance which shows the injury that may be wrought by a faulty expression.

Thesis XV.

In the eleventh place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Gospel is turned into a preaching of repentance.

To understand these words correctly, you will have to bear in mind that the term *Gospel* has a usage similar to that of the term *repentance.* In the Holy Scriptures the term *repentance* is used in a wide and in a narrow sense. In the wide sense it signifies conversion viewed in its entirety, embracing knowledge of sin, contrition, and faith. This meaning occurs in Acts 2, 38, where

we read: "*Repent* and be baptized every one of you," etc. The apostle does not say: "Repent and believe." Accordingly, he refers to conversion in its entirety, inclusive of faith. Nor could he have said: "Be contrite and then be baptized." He must have conceived of contrition as joined with faith. What he means to say is this: If you acknowledge your sins and believe in the Gospel which I have just preached to you, then be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.

The term *repentance* is used in a narrow sense to signify the knowledge of sin and heartfelt sorrow and contrition. In Mark 1, 15 we read: "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." In this statement John the Baptist evidently did not include faith in repentance, otherwise his statement would be tautological. In Acts 20, 21 Paul relates that he had been "testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Since faith is named *separately* in this text, the term *repentance* cannot embrace knowledge of sin, contrition, and faith. Likewise, the Lord says concerning the Jews that despite the preaching of John the Baptist they "repented not afterward that they might believe him," Matt. 21, 32 (Luther translates: "*tatet ihr dennoch nicht Busse, dass ihr ihm danach auch geglaubt haettet*"). By repentance he refers to the effects of the Law and means to say that, since they had not become alarmed over their sins, it had not been possible for them to believe. For there will not be faith in a heart that has not first been terrified.

There is a similar usage as regards the term *Gospel;* sometimes it is used in a wide, then again in a narrow meaning. The narrow meaning is its proper sense; in its wide meaning it is used merely by way of synecdoche, signifying anything that Jesus preached, including even His very poignant preaching of the Law, as, for instance, the Sermon on the Mount and His reproving of wicked men. Besides the term *Gospel* is used in contradistinction to the Old Testament, which often signifies only the teaching of the Law.

Rom. 2, 16 we read: *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel.* Here the apostle cannot refer to the Gospel in the narrow sense, for that has nothing to do with the Judgment, since Scripture declares: "He that believeth on Him is not condemned" — "shall not come into condemnation." John 3, 18; 5, 24. By *Gospel* in this text, Paul understands the doctrine which he had proclaimed and which was composed of both Law and Gospel.

The term *Gospel* is unquestionably used in the narrow sense in Rom. 1, 16: *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.* It is called, first, a Gospel of Jesus Christ; next, a Gospel that saves *all that believe it.* No such demand is made upon us by the Law, which requires that we *keep* it. Accordingly, the apostle is here speaking of God's gift to the world and of faith, hence of the Gospel in the narrow sense, to the exclusion of the Law.

Another pertinent text is Eph. 6, 15, which speaks of "*the Gospel of peace.*" Since the Law does not bring peace, but only unrest, the apostle in this text is speaking of the Gospel in the narrow sense, that is, of the glad tidings that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners.

Our Lutheran Confessions follow the Bible in using the term *Gospel* now in the wide, now in the narrow sense. That explains the statement which occurs in them, *viz.:* "The Gospel preaches repentance." You will have to note this fact in order to understand our thesis correctly: a commingling of Law and Gospel takes place when the *Gospel of Christ,* that is, the Gospel in the narrow sense, is turned into a preaching of repentance.

In the *Apology,* Art. XII, § 29 (Mueller, p. 171; *Trigl. Conc.,* p. 258), we read: "For the sum of the Gospel is comprehended in these two parts: First, it tells us to amend our lives, thus denouncing every one as a sinner. In the second place, it offers forgiveness of sin, everlasting life, salvation, every blessing, and the Holy Spirit through Christ, by whom we are born again."

It is quite evident that in this passage Melanchthon is using the term *Gospel* in the wide sense. Luther does the same in ever so many places throughout his writings, whenever he speaks of the Gospel's reproving men. But when he teaches what the Gospel really is, he speaks of nothing but consolation, mercy, forgiveness of sins; in short, of what the Gospel in the narrow sense proclaims.

Lest you think that Melanchthon, who is not always absolutely to be trusted, used a faulty diction even in our Confessions, let me submit another citation from the *Apology,* Art. XII, §§ 53. 54 (Mueller, p. 175; *Trigl. Conc.,* p. 264): "Accordingly, the entire Scriptures urge these two doctrines. The one is the Law, which reveals our misery and reproves sin. The other doctrine is the Gospel; for the promise of God, when He offers grace through Christ, the promise of grace, is repeated again and again throughout the Scriptures ever since the days of Adam. For at first the promise of grace, or the first Gospel, was given to Adam in these words:

'I will put emnity,' etc. Afterwards promises concerning the same Christ were made to Abraham and the patriarchs; later it was preached by the prophets, and lastly the same promise was preached among the Jews by Christ Himself when He had come into the world, and finally it was spread among the Gentiles throughout the world by the apostles. For by faith in the Gospel all patriarchs and all the saints since the beginning of the world have been made righteous in the sight of God, not on account of their contrition or sorrow or any other work."

From this statement you can see that when Melanchthon, a few pages previous, says: "First, the Gospel says: Amend your lives," he uses the term *Gospel* in the wider sense, referring to the tidings of grace together with the preaching of the Law, and *vice versa*. But in the last-quoted passage he speaks of "both parts" as contrasted with one another, naming the two doctrines into which the entire Scripture is divided.

It is not only extremely dangerous, but actually harmful to the souls of men for a minister to preach in such a manner as to lead men to believe that he regards the Gospel in its narrow and proper sense as a preaching of the Law and of the anger of God against sinners, calling them to repentance. Not to be cautious about the terms he uses is a great and serious fault even in a preacher whose personal faith may be correct. Accordingly, the Lutheran Church has from the beginning watched a speaker closely who was wont to say: "The Gospel is a preaching of repentance," to see whether he was speaking of the Gospel in the wide or in the narrow sense. When Melanchthon published the Altered Augsburg Confession, he was looked upon with suspicion because of the new exposition he gave of this matter. He was immediately taken to task by Flacius, who never took false teaching lightly. Melanchthon receded from his position and admitted that he had indeed used inadequate, in fact, wrong terms. This was satisfactory to Flacius, who did not wish to quarrel about terms, since heresy is not so much in the terms one uses as in the matter which one teaches, although the terms are not to be treated as an indifferent matter. When using terms that do not correctly express a certain thought, we are not heretics, but careless speakers. Accordingly, Flacius did not rush at Melanchthon, exclaiming: "For God's sake, look what you have done!"

The first to teach entirely false doctrine on this point was John Agricola, the antinomian fanatic. He was an untrustworthy, utterly careless person, who misused the Gospel. He was conceited to a

high degree, but he was a learned man. During an illness which every one thought would prove fatal he remarked facetiously: "You cannot kill weeds." He started out to gather prestige for himself when Luther began to preach stern Law sermons to secure sinners. He imagined that Luther had fallen away from his own teaching of the blessed Gospel which he had proclaimed at a time when he had an entirely different audience, namely, people who had been utterly crushed by the Law. He thought the time had come for him to show that he was the Reformer. He published anonymously eighteen *Propositiones inter Fratres Sparsas* ("Theses Spread among Brethren"). They are found in the St. Louis edition of Luther's Works, Vol. XX, 1624 ff.

Thesis XVIII reads: "For the Gospel of Christ teaches the wrath of God from heaven and at the same time the righteousness that is valid in the sight of God. Rom. 1, 17. For it is a preaching unto repentance, attached to God's promise, which reason does not grasp by nature, but only by a divine revelation."

Rom. 1, 17 the apostle starts a new section of his treatise. After announcing the subject of his epistle, he takes up the Law and in the second half of the first, in the entire second, and in the first half of the third chapter urges its claim. This part of his teaching he begins with the word: "The wrath of God from heaven," etc. He declares that everybody carries in his own bosom the judge that condemns him and feels and observes everywhere the judgments of the holy and righteous God. After preaching the Law, the apostle takes up the Gospel. Now, Agricola interprets the apostle's words as signifying that the wrath of God is manifested in the Gospel, taking Gospel in the strict sense of the term. He indulges in foolish talk when he calls the Gospel "a preaching unto repentance attached to God's promise, which reason does not grasp by nature, but only by a divine revelation." He declares that it cannot be understood, yet he undertakes to preach it to people who have as yet not been crushed. That is self-contradictory, — but that is what heretics always are.

Afterwards the Philippists, the followers of Melanchthon, took up Agricola's teaching. Good Melanchthon could not keep his fanatical followers from declaring Agricola's teaching exactly orthodox instead of saying, as Melanchthon had done, that he had used inadequate terms, which did not express his real meaning.

The worst of these fanatics was Caspar Cruciger the Younger. His father had been an excellent theologian, and Luther had at one time desired him to become his successor. But this son of old

Cruciger did not turn out well; he wrote a treatise on justification in 1570 in which he said: "In this office [of the Gospel] God wants to terrify men by the preaching of repentance, which reveals both, all the sins that are set forth in the Law and this saddest of all sins which is really shown up in the Gospel, namely, the failure to know the Son of God and the contempt of Him." (*Disp. de Justif. Hom.* [1570], Thes. 10. See Hutter's *Expl. Conc.*, p. 472.) Cruciger contrasts the Gospel with the Law and claims that the Law does not show us the worst sins, but that this is done by the Gospel. Some thought that Agricola was not altogether wrong, because the Law has nothing to say about the faith which justifies a sinner; hence the sin of unbelief must be revealed in the Gospel. This, however, is only apparently so. The Gospel is the preaching of consolation. Though we must conclude that contempt of the Gospel is the most horrible sin, still it is not the Gospel that teaches it, but it is an inference drawn from the Gospel. Certainly I can, by inverting it, turn the most comforting doctrine into a comfortless one. No; it is the Law that reproves unbelief. Where? In the First Commandment, which signifies that "we are to fear, love, and *trust* in God above all things." Unbelief, no matter in what relation it is viewed, is forbidden in the First Commandment. When I commit the sin of unbelief, I *sin* because I break the Law, which requires me to trust in God and believe His Word. The Gospel did not come into the world to reveal the sin of unbelief; this sin had been previously revealed by the Law.

This point you will have to bear in mind, or you cannot prevail against Antinomians.

Agricola's error had also been espoused by Pezel, who wrote a treatise against Wigand, in which he said: "The Gospel in the strict sense contains the sternest threatening and reproves sin, namely, the sin of unbelief, of refusing to know the Son, of despising the anger of God, and finally, of despair." (*Adversus Wigandum.* Comp. Hutter's *Explic. Cond.*, p. 472.) It is gross nonsense when he says in this connection that the Law has not a word to say that despair is sin. Are we not to love and trust in God? That excludes despair. Hence despair must be the most abominable and horrible sin. The Gospel does say: "Believe, and you shall be saved." From this the inference can be drawn: "If I do not believe, I shall not be saved." But this is because the Law requires me to believe. You must rivet this fact on your mind, so as not to be deluded by the claim of Antinomians, which is a most horrible case of commingling Law and Gospel, to which you must never lend

your ears. When preaching the Gospel, you must not present it with a black cloud hovering over it, but proclaim free grace and unconditioned consolation. When we are in the agony of death, we must have a sound cable of which we may take hold. We must know that what we grasp is not the Law.

The Antinomians who opposed Luther may have been well-intentioned men, but they were Pharisees. In their pitiful blindness they imagined that they were helping the world by their teaching, while they deprived the world of its only means of rescue.

Paul Crell's treatise against Wigand in 1571, may also be noted in this connection. He says: "Since the greatest and chief sin is revealed, reproved, and condemned only by the Gospel, it is, strictly speaking, the Gospel *alone* which is really and truly the preaching that calls for repentance or conversion in the true and proper sense." (*Disp. adversus Joh. Wigandum.* 1571. Comp. Hutter's *Explic. Conc.,* p. 471 f.)

Let us hear now what our Confessions say about this matter, which had become involved in many obscurities. By the *Formula of Concord,* harmony was to be restored also in this point of doctrine. It says, in the *Epitome,* Art. V, §§ 6. 7. 11 (Mueller, p. 535; *Trigl. Conc.,* p. 803): "If the Law and the Gospel, likewise also Moses himself, as a teacher of the Law, and Christ, as a Preacher of the Gospel, are contrasted with one another, we believe, teach, and confess that the Gospel is not a preaching of repentance or reproof, but properly nothing else than a preaching of consolation and a joyful message, which does not reprove or terrify, but comforts consciences against the terrors of the Law, points alone to the merit of Christ, and raises them up again by the lovely preaching of the grace and favor of God, obtained through Christ's merit.

"As to the revelation of sin, because the veil of Moses hangs before the eyes of all men as long as they hear the bare preaching of the Law and nothing concerning Christ and therefore do not learn from the Law to perceive their sins aright, but either become presumptuous hypocrites, who swell with the opinion of their own righteousness, like the Pharisees, or despair like Judas, Christ takes the Law into His hands and explains it spiritually. Matt. 5, 21 ff.; Rom. 7, 14. And thus the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sinners, Rom. 1, 18, how great it is; by this means they are directed to the Law and then first learn from it to know aright their sins — a knowledge which Moses never could have forced out of them. . . .

"Accordingly we reject and regard as incorrect and injurious

the dogma that the Gospel is properly a preaching of repentance, or reproof, and not alone a preaching of grace; for thereby the Gospel is again converted into a doctrine of the Law, the merit of Christ and Holy Scripture are obscured, Christians robbed of true consolation, and the door is opened again to the errors and superstitions of the Papacy."

In view of the fact that Scripture does not always employ the term *Gospel* in the same sense, the Antinomians had ascribed to the Gospel in the strict sense something that could be ascribed to the Gospel only in the wide sense. We must bear in mind that there is also a Gospel which does not reprove sin, but affords the only comfort to sinners. When reading the Scriptures, we must be able to tell whether the term *Gospel* in a certain passage is intended in the wide or in the strict sense, and we must be particularly careful to find the passages where it is used in the latter meaning.

The same teaching that has been rejected by the Formula of Concord was embodied in the *Interim* (the compromise effected between the Evangelicals and the Romanists) and in the *Decrees of the Council of Trent.*

Next Friday we shall try to ascertain in which passages of Scripture the term *Gospel* is clearly used in the strict sense. This matter is quite important, especially for young preachers, if they are to learn how to express their thoughts correctly.

TWENTY-SEVENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(May 8, 1885.)

All mankind, you know, is distributed among three estates, appointed and ordained by God Himself: the estate of teachers, of producers, and defenders, the *Lehrstand, Naehrstand*, and *Wehrstand*, as the Germans call them. In view of the statement of David in Ps. 111, 3: "His work is honorable and glorious," none of these God-ordained estates is to be esteemed lightly; for in each one of these estates a person can pursue his way to heaven, please God and God's children, and serve God and his fellow-men. What more do we need? In the estate of teachers we have those who teach in the Church and in the schools; in the estate of producers we have peasants, artisans, artists, and scholars; in the estate of defenders we have governors, state officers, jurists, and soldiers.

True, the estate of teachers has, in general, been little respected, especially in ages gone by; and as far as the teachers of the Word of God are concerned, they are, of all men, most despised and even hated by the world. Nevertheless their estate and office is the most glorious of all, for the following reasons: —

1. The work of their office centers about man's spiritual welfare, his immortal soul.

2. They employ the most salutary means and instrument in their work, namely, the Word of the living God.

3. They aim at the most salutary and glorious end, namely, to make man truly happy in the present life and to lead him to the life of eternal bliss.

4. They are most wholesomely engaged in an occupation which entirely satisfies their spirits and advances their own selves in the way of salvation.

5. Their labor yields the most precious result, namely, the salvation of man.

6. Their labors have the most glorious promise of the cooperation of the Lord, so that they are never entirely futile and in vain.

7. Their labors have the promise of a gracious reward, which consists in a glory in the world to come that is unutterably great, exceeding abundantly above all they ever could have asked and prayed for in this life.

If men would stop to consider these points, they would come crowding into the sacred office of the ministry and that of teachers of religion, as they are crowding into great state offices, which yield them honor and great emoluments. Parents would deem it a high honor and a special grace of God if they could have their sons trained for this sacred office. Young theologians would feel constrained every day to go down on their knees and praise and magnify God's holy name for having done such great things for them, predestinating them from eternity to this exalted and sacred office. Yea, I am forced to say that, if the holy angels, who have been confirmed in eternal bliss, where capable of envy, they would, even in their state of celestial glory, unquestionably envy every teacher of the Gospel. For all that is recorded concerning them in Holy Scripture does not equal the greatness of the office of teachers and preachers, in which men become helpers in the task of bringing fallen creatures back to their Creator. Without doubt these rescued people will forever and ever thank those by whose ministry they were saved from perdition and brought into life everlasting.

However, this reflection upon the estate of preachers and teachers of the Word of God must make them ever more faithful in the performance of their office. They must strive to present the doctrine which they preach in a pure and unadulterated form and teach it in such a manner that their hearers will learn to know, on the one hand, their own misery, and, on the other, the goodness of God, become believers, be kept in the faith, and finally come to those blessed abodes where they shall see God and praise and magnify Him forever and ever.

We have seen that the principal task of a preacher is rightly to divide the Word of Truth. He must not be like a carpenter who is trimming a block and does not mind where the chips fall, but he must be like a goldsmith who is working with a precious metal and is careful to pick up even the minutest particle that drops from his working-table. May God grant you His Holy Spirit abundantly and make you faithful guardians over the immense treasures which will be entrusted to you when you enter the ministry! May you truly provide for the precious souls which God puts in your care, in order that it may be said of you when you have finished your labors: "Their works do follow them." Then you will never feel sorry, neither during these years of study nor later in the ministry, that you have had to submit to penurious conditions. You will praise God when you shall see that from pure grace He is making you to shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever.

We have examined the principal proofs for the fifteenth thesis and have repelled some of the objections that are raised against it. I wish to call attention to two additional objections.

In the first place, it is objected that Scripture itself calls the Gospel a law and that, hence, the Gospel may be called a preaching unto repentance, because the Law serves the purpose of leading men to repentance. Rom. 3, 27 is cited, where we read: "Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by *the law of faith*." According to the apostle's own terminology the objecters say that the Gospel, too, is a law. This is drawing a faulty inference from the apostle's words. The apostle in this passage employs the figure of antanaclasis: he uses the same word which his opponent has used, however, in a different meaning, to refute the opponent.

To illustrate: When the Jews, from a self-righteous motive, asked Christ: "What shall we do that we might work the *works*

of God?" John 6, 28, He answered: "This is the *work* of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." V. 29. They had misunderstood the term "work of God" which the Lord had used, imagining that He was referring to works which man must do to please God. Christ retains the term, but employs it in an entirely different meaning. He means to say: "Works do not save a person; but doing no works for the purpose of achieving some merit, relying solely on Christ the Redeemer and His grace, — that is what saves." Hence a person is made righteous in the sight of God by what He receives from God. This figure of speech is used also in ordinary daily life. When a son who has been slovenly in his work comes to his father and impudently asks for his *wages,* the father will say: "Indeed, I shall give you your *wages* — with the rod." The simplest people make use of this figure of speech. In a similar manner death is called the *wages* of sin. Now, death is not really a premium that God has put on sin. Again, the Lord, we are told in Matt. 24, 51, will appoint to the evil servant "his *portion* with the hypocrites, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Hence it cannot be established from Rom. 3, 27 that the Gospel is a preaching unto repentance. Only a person who is not conversant with rhetoric will cite this passage for proof. Among the requirements for a proper understanding of Holy Scripture are the rules of rhetoric; for Scripture is quite rhetorical and full of tropes.

Quenstedt says: "Properly speaking, and in contrast with the Law, the Gospel is not a doctrine that enjoins upon men inherent righteousness, of which faith, regarded as a work, is either a part or a disposition for it; but it proclaims the gracious forgiveness of sin and the righteousness that is valid in the sight of God, as something that is to be accepted by faith, as the receiving organ. For this reason the Gospel is called 'the ministration of righteousness.' 2 Cor. 3, 9." (*Theol. Did.-Polem., cap de ev.,* s. 2, 9. 4 f. 1029.)

Another objection is raised on the basis of Rom. 10, 16: "They have not all *obeyed* the Gospel." It is argued that, since it is really the Law which enjoins obedience, the Gospel is not merely a message of joy, but an improved law. However, it is an utter perversion of this text to try to prove from it that the Gospel in the strict sense is a preaching unto repentance. We are to obey the will of God not only as expressed in the Law, but also His gracious will. But the latter is not a will of the Law. By His gracious will, God offers and gives us all things. If we accept what He gives, we are

said to obey Him. It is an act of kindness on God's part to call it obedience. And indeed, when we do obey Him thus, we are also fulfilling the First Commandment, for faith is commanded in the Law, not in the Gospel. The Gospel is called "glad tidings"; but glad tidings cannot be anything that imposes a task on me which I am to perform. Only those tidings are good tidings which tell me to put away all fear because God is gracious by advancing to meet me.

Gerhard writes: "The accusation of unbelief belongs to the Law as illumined by the light of the Gospel. Luther takes cognizance of this fact when he says that the work of believing in Christ and the contrary sin of unbelief are related to the First Commandment." (*Loc. de ev.*, § 111.)

We have previously noted that Luther speaks of faith as a return to the First Commandment. To accept the grace of God as soon as it is offered to me, to take comfort in it, to thank God for it, and not to be so insolent as to try to achieve by one's own effort what the Father in heaven is offering by grace, — that is the sublimest way of fulfilling the First Commandment.

Hear the testimony from *Luther's Preface to the New Testament* (St. L. Ed. XIV, pp. 85—90): "As the Old Testament is a book in which have been recorded the Law and commandments of God, together with the history both of those who kept them and those who did not keep them, so the New Testament is a book in which have been recorded the Gospel and the promises of God, together with the history of those who believed them and those who did not believe them. For the term *Gospel* is a Greek term; its German meaning is: a goodly message, glad tidings, good news, a good report, of which men speak and sing in cheerful strains. As, for instance, when David had conquered the great Goliath, a good report, or the good news, circulated among the Jewish people that their worst enemy was slain and that they had been delivered and restored to happiness and peace. So the Gospel of God and the New Testament are glad tidings and report, which were spread throughout the world by the apostles, concerning One who was a true David, fighting against sin, death, and the devil and conquering them and by His victory redeeming, justifying, quickening, saving, and restoring to peace with God, all those who were in bondage under sin, tormented by death, and overcome by the devil, and causing them to sing, thank, and praise God and rejoice forever, provided they firmly believe it and remain steadfast in this faith.

"This report and comforting message, these divine evangelical glad tidings, are also called a *new testament,* because, as in a testament, by which a dying person disposes of his goods and orders them to be distributed among his appointed heirs after his death, Christ, prior to His death, has given command and directions to proclaim this Gospel throughout the world after His death, therewith bestowing upon believers, as their possession, all His goods, to wit, His life, by which He has swallowed up death, His righteousness, by which He has wiped out sin, and His salvation, by which He has defeated eternal damnation.

"Now, a poor human being that is dead in sins and consigned to hell cannot be told anything more precious than this blessed, lovely message concerning Christ. If he believes that it is true, he must rejoice in his heart of hearts and be glad. . . .

"The Gospel, then, is nothing else than preaching concerning Christ, the Son of God and David's Son, true God and man, who by His death and resurrection has overcome sin, death, and hell for all those who believe in Him. Accordingly, the Gospel may be set forth in a brief or in a long statement by various writers. An extensive account is given by the four evangelists, who recount many works and words of Christ. A brief account is given, for instance, by Peter and Paul, who do not describe the activities of Christ, but indicate briefly how He, by His death and resurrection, has conquered death and hell for those who believe in Him.

"See, then, that you do not make Christ a new Moses or His Gospel a book of law or instruction, as has been done heretofore in some prefaces that have been written to the New Testament, also by St. Jerome. For the Gospel, properly so called, does not require our works for making us godly and serving us; yea, it abominates our works. On the contrary, it demands that we believe in Christ, namely, that He has conquered sin, death, and hell for us and makes us godly, quickens us, and saves us, not by our works, but by His works and His suffering and dying, so that we may appropriate His death and victory as if we had achieved it ourselves.

"The many commandments and instructions, however, and the expositions of the Law which Christ in the Gospel and also St. Peter and Paul have given, are to be received like all other works and blessings of Christ. Knowing the works and history of Christ is not yet knowing the true Gospel; for that does not embrace the knowledge that He has conquered sin, death, and the devil. Even so, knowing the doctrine and commandments recorded in the New

Testament is not yet knowing the Gospel; but this is the Gospel, when you hear the voice which tells you that Christ is your own with His life, teaching, works, His dying, His rising from death, and everything that He is, has, does and is able to do.

"Accordingly, we see that He is not compelling men, but invites them with kind words, saying: 'Blessed are the poor,' etc. The apostles use terms like these: 'I exhort, I beseech, I pray you.' All of which shows that the Gospel is not a law-book, but, properly speaking, a sermon concerning the blessings of Christ, given us to have as our own if we believe. Moses, however, in his writings drives, compels, threatens, beats, and chastises men in a horrible fashion; for he is a writer and enforcer of the Law.

"That is the reason why no law is given to believers to make them righteous in the sight of God, as St. Paul says, 1 Tim. 1, 9; for the believer is made righteous, is quickened, and is saved by Christ. Nothing is required of him but that he manifest his faith by his works. Indeed, when there is faith, it cannot be restrained; it manifests itself, it breaks forth in good works, it confesses and teaches the Gospel publicly and risks its life in doing so. All that a believer does during his life is made to tend to the advantage of his fellow-men and their aid; not only that his fellow-men may also obtain the grace of the Gospel, but also that he follows the example of Christ and sacrifice his life, possessions, and honor for others as Christ has done for him. That is what Christ means when at the end of His life He gave His disciples no other commandment than this, that they love one another, telling them that thereby men would see who were His disciples and sincere believers. For faith, unless it breaks forth in works of love, is not genuine, and in such persons the Gospel has not yet taken root, nor have they come to know Christ aright."

Here we have Luther's *Introduction to the New Testament.* It is quite brief, but of much greater value than that of modern scholars, the majority of whom have made it their aim to tear down the foundation of faith by making the Bible unreliable.

Note the salient points in the citation from Luther. Luther admits that, when the term *Gospel* is used in a synecdochical sense, it may, in certain passages, reprove men's sin. But it is a remarkable fact that, while the term *Law* is frequently used so as to include the Gospel, the term *Gospel* is never used in the place of the Law; nor will you find in all the Scriptures a passage in which the term *Law* can be substituted for the Gospel in the strict sense.

What Luther says in definition of the Gospel in the strict sense should make you extremely careful not to mingle any elements of the Law into your statements regarding the Gospel. You must proclaim the Law forcefully; your pulpit must reverberate with its thunder and lightning. But the moment you begin to speak of the Gospel, the Law must be hushed. Moses set up a barrier around Mount Sinai, but Christ and the apostles placed no barrier around Golgotha. Here everybody is accorded free access. The person approaching the God of the Law must be righteous; the person approaching the reconciling God on Golgotha may come just as he is. Yea, he is welcome for the very reason that he is a sinner, if he will but come.

According to Luther's description of the Gospel as the last will and testament of Christ, the Gospel is not a doctrine teaching us how we may make ourselves worthy in the sight of God, but what we are to receive from God. Luther occasionally uses this expression that, objectively, every person is already righteous in the sight of God because of the living and dying of Christ in his stead. When God justifies an individual by offering him the Gospel and the individual refuses to accept it, he is, indeed, not justified, but is and remains a condemned sinner. To such a person the chief torment of hell will be the fact that he knows: "I was redeemed; I was reconciled to God; I was righteous; but because I would not believe it, I am now in this place of torment." The joyful message which you are to bring to your people is this: "You are redeemed; you are reconciled to God; you have been made righteous; you are blessed people. Salvation has been acquired also for you. Do but believe it. Of what use would it be if some one were to offer you millions, holding them out to you, and you would not deem it worth while to extend your hand and take them? You would still remain beggars until your dying day." Untold numbers of men remain in their state of condemnation in spite of the perfect redemption of Christ proclaimed to them and offered them in the Gospel.

Luther correctly remarks that the mere regarding of the Gospel as a truthful record is not justifying faith. A person must *believe that what the Gospel says concerns him.* He who does not consider *himself* redeemed does not believe that the Gospel is true. The Gospel is God's message to every individual throughout the world, telling him: "You have been received into grace by God; God is no longer angry with you. His Son has wiped out all your

sins. The only thing you need do is to accept this message." Adopt this as a principle for your activity in your congregation, always to proclaim this glad message in your pulpit, so that your congregation will rejoice at having a pastor who is a true evangelist. Do not follow your reason, which will tell you that by preaching the Gospel to them you will make your hearers secure. It is not so; on the contrary, when the grace and glory of the Gospel are truly held out to men, this rouses them, makes them joyful and therefore willing to do good works and, as it were, kindles a heavenly fire in their hearts. This effect is inevitable. Any one coming in contact with fire is made to glow; a person who comes in contact with the fire of divine love is made to glow with love to God and his fellow-men. It goes without saying that the Law must be continually preached, lest the hearers become surfeited, so that the Gospel does not benefit them.

You may be assured that the Lutheran Church is distinct from all others by the fact that it preaches a perfect redemption and hence does not represent faith as a work, but merely as the receiving hand by which the sinner accepts the gifts of God; furthermore, that it invites all sinners who are alarmed over their sins, no matter how abominable their conduct may have been, to come, for all things are ready for them. The reason why our Church has also the true doctrine of the Sacraments is that it teaches the true doctrine of salvation by grace alone.

Luther says the Gospel is not a law-book, not even a book of instruction, but a message of joy. Men cannot rejoice over it too soon, and their joy, whenever it enters their hearts, is a heavenly, divine joy. If a person constantly complains that he cannot see in what way he is to be benefited by the Gospel, and if the preaching of the Gospel leaves his heart empty, he has no one to blame but himself and his refusal to believe.

As to Jerome, who, next to Origen, was the greatest linguist of the early centuries of the Christian Church, Luther was very much loath to read his writings because there was precious little of the Gospel in them.

When David had slain Goliath, all that the children of Israel had to do was to make use of their liberty. After the defeat of their leader the enemies had fled. Christ has conquered our enemies and done everything to set us entirely free. We have no more to do than the Israelites when David returned victorious from his conflict. They were no longer to be afraid of a defeated host.

We are, likewise, no longer to be afraid of the Law, sin, death, the devil, and eternal perdition. All these were our enemies, and they have been put to flight. To continue fearing them is a reproach to Christ, which incites God to anger. If I believe God to be angry with me, I certainly have an angry God; if I believe Him to be kind to me, I have a kind God and need not vex my mind with doubts whether, after all, He may not be angry with me.

Whenever Luther spoke of the Gospel as preaching repentance and the wrath of God, he was far from referring to the Gospel in the strict sense. The citation which you have heard shows you how he speaks whenever he refers to the Gospel in the strict and proper sense. He wrote that preface in the time of his first love, in 1522, and reiterated and augmented it in 1527. His whole discourse is glowing with such ardent love that a poor sinner, on hearing this testimony, feels like leaping for joy. True, a slave of sin, who is wallowing in his filth, does not relish this soul-food; he is like the well-known beast that prefers acorns to anything else. In Lutheran congregations the Gospel, these truly precious tidings, must be preached, and the entire congregation must be pervaded by the Gospel spirit. If that is the case, the people are not continually put in terror by the Law, but are made glad by the Gospel. When we preach the Law, it is not to make men saints, but sinners.

When Luther speaks of the manifestation of faith by works, we must bear in mind that works are not necessary *per se;* in God's estimate they are not necessary at all for our salvation. But they are necessary on men's account, in order that they may see a Christian exercising his faith by means of them, may praise the Father which is in heaven, and accept Him as their God. We should test our own faith by these remarks of Luther. Faith cannot be shut in. It is like a sea that can be tapped: it rushes irresistibly through any proper opening that is made for it. A believer is ready to serve everybody wherever he can. He cannot but profess the Gospel before men, even though he foresees that he will reap nothing but ridicule and scorn for it; yea, he is ready also to give his life for the Gospel. He knows that, if he refuses to do these things, he will have to forsake Christ and that, if he denies Christ, the light of faith will be extinguished in him. Accordingly, he confesses Christ not merely because Christ has said: "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven," Matt. 10, 32, but because he cannot do otherwise.

Let us now take up the Bible-passages which refer to the

Gospel in the strict sense, and learn by what marks we may know them. There are five marks: —

1. Whenever the Gospel is contrasted with the Law, it is quite certain that the term *Gospel* does not refer to the Gospel in the wide, but in the narrow sense.

Eph. 2, 14—17 we read: *He is our Peace, who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the Law of commandments, contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new main, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace* [Luther: by the *Gospel*] *unto you which were afar off and to them that were nigh.* According to this text the preaching of the Law, which does not bring peace, precedes and is followed by the Gospel, which brings peace.

2. Whenever the Gospel is presented as the peculiar teaching of Christ or as the doctrine that proclaims Christ, it cannot refer to the Law at the same time; for we read, John 1, 17: *The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

Jesus Christ did not first publish the Law, but He purged the Law from the false interpretations of the Pharisees, because the proper knowledge of the Law is necessary before a person is able to accept the Gospel.

Luke 4, 18. 19 the Lord says: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* In this text the Lord Jesus sets forth His mission to the world, the real object of His preaching as Christ, the Savior of the world. He concluded the foregoing statement by saying, v. 21: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." He had not spoken to his audience a word concerning the Law, but had only referred to the doctrine that is offered to the poor, the sick, those of a bruised heart, and those in the bondage of sin and the devil.

Acts 17, 18 we read: *Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them* [Luther: the Gospel concerning] *Jesus and the resurrection.* The doctrine which has Jesus for its subject is the Gospel in the strict sense.

Under this head belong also the following passages: 1 Cor. 15, 1—4: *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the* GOSPEL *which I preached unto you, which also ye have received and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.* Rom. 16, 25. 26: *Now, to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my* GOSPEL *and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.* Gal. 1, 6. 7: *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert* THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

3. Whenever poor sinners are named as the subject to whom the Gospel is addressed, you may be certain that the reference is to the Gospel in the strict sense. Matt. 11, 5: *The poor have the* GOSPEL *preached to them.* Luke, 4, 18: The Spirit of the Lord is *upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach* THE GOSPEL *to the poor.*

4. Whenever forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and salvation by grace are named as effects of the Gospel, the reference is to the Gospel in the strict sense. Rom. 1, 16: *I am not ashamed of* THE GOSPEL *of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.* Eph. 1, 13: *In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the Word of Truth,* THE GOSPEL *of your salvation.*

5. When faith is named as the correlate of the Gospel, the reference is to the Gospel in the strict sense. Mark 1, 15: *Repent ye and* BELIEVE THE GOSPEL. Mark 16, 15. 16: *Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.* Also the passage cited last certainly refers to the Gospel in the strict sense. The remarks of the Lord about unbelievers who shall be damned, are not indeed a part of the Gospel, but Law. The Lord adds these remarks in order to let those who reject the Gospel know that by their unbelief they are doing that which will hurl them into perdition.

TWENTY-EIGHTH EVENING LECTURE.

(May 15, 1885.)

Preparing to write a sermon which he is to deliver from his pulpit, a minister should approach this task every time with fear and trembling, that is, with the reverent concern that he preach nothing contrary to the Word of God. He must most carefully examine everything that he has written down to see whether it is in harmony with the Word of God and the experience of Christians. He should weigh everything that he is to speak in public in the scales of the sanctuary for weighing gold to see whether it agrees with the writings of the apostles and prophets. A preacher, after writing a few paragraphs, may be impressed with the beauty and power of what he has written and think that he has succeeded well in his effort. Yet he must not allow that impression to delude him, but he ought carefully once more to go over the very passages which seem so beautiful to him to see whether they contain anything that is false or that has been expressed in such a manner as to be liable to be misunderstood and to arouse false conceptions in his hearers. As soon as he notices something of this kind, he must be stern, yea, cruel, against himself and draw a heavy black line through the beautiful periods, even if he has bestowed much time and labor upon them. Those periods represent labor lost because they were merely the product of his genius, not of a clear knowledge drawn from the Word of God. Indeed, a preacher may discover with considerable alarm that an entire part of his sermon, or even the entire sermon, has turned out altogether wrong. In a case like that he must not say that he cannot afford to have spent so much labor in vain. If the product turned out wrong, it must be cashiered. There are no two ways about this. If he has no time to write a new sermon, he had better speak rather extempore than deliver what he has laboriously composed. If a minister who is otherwise conscientious has had the misfortune of putting something into his manuscript that is wrong and even saying it from the pulpit, he must, if he notices his mistake while preaching, immediately correct himself and tell his hearers that he really did not mean to say what they have just heard from him. If he notices his mistake later and the matter is of considerable importance, he must make the correction later, lest his hearers be led utterly astray. Yea, he may not only have to correct his wrong statement, but solemnly to revoke it. That will

not lower him in the esteem of his listeners; on the contrary, his conscientious striving for accuracy will rather impress them favorably. He must not rely on the ability of his hearers to give the correct interpretation to incorrect statements of his, but must speak so as not to be misunderstood in what he says.

For this reason the apostle addresses this warning to all preachers: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" 1 Cor. 5, 6; comp. Gal. 5, 9. False teaching is a leaven, yea, we might say, a poison, that will penetrate every artery and kill a person. It is a fact experienced every day that a little poison produces awful effects; it may prove fatal to a person; while a whole piece of arsenic may be swallowed without injury because it becomes enwrapped in saliva. Unspeakably great damage may be caused by one false sentence spoken in a sermon. For instance, the preacher may administer an unwarranted reproof that is taken up by godly, conscientious Christians who are full of concern about their soul and are working out their salvation with fear and trembling. When such sincere Christians observe in themselves something that the preacher has marked as a fault and as something by which men may forfeit divine grace, they may become uncertain of their state of grace and imagine that they dare not believe that they will be saved. In a case like this the preacher must not think that by talking on the same topic in a different strain on some future Sunday he will have furnished the needed corrective. For the greater the confidence which his hearers have in his orthodoxy, his genuine Christianity, and his great experience, the greater will be their difficulty in plucking out of their hearts the arrow which he shot into them by his unwarranted rebuke. Again, on an occasion when he should have administered a rebuke, he may have offered false comfort to the delight of all false Christians, who disregard all the rest of his sermon and lay hold of only that part which permits them to regard themselves as good Christians, when they are anything but that. Is it not an awful condition for a carnally secure person to get into and to remain in his blindness until the final summons consigns him to eternal perdition?

Mistakes like these may happen even to a sincere pastor. In a moment of inattention, when he is not on his guard and does not pray while he is writing his sermon, God may permit him to rely on his own strength in order to make him see the sorry results which he has achieved without prayer. Imagine the anguish of

a minister who has to blame himself when he sees some parishioner of his walking in a wrong path! Every one of your sermons must be the product of heartfelt prayer. When you sit down to the task of writing your sermon and feel that you are distracted, cold, and dead, you must not think: "That cannot be helped; I must fill this page." No; lay your pen aside; call earnestly upon your Father in heaven to lift you out of your miserable state of mind, to give you a fervent heart, to overcome everything in you that is not godly, to let the breath of His Holy Spirit enter your heart, and you will be able to do more than merely *write down* words of comfort whose import you do not at all feel and which leave your own heart cheerless. You will not indulge in the futile thought that all is well with regard to your sermon since you are only repeating what is in the Bible. Your most serious purpose while preparing your sermon will be to find a way of making a goodly haul with the Gospel net.

Ministers are at fault in this respect more than we imagine. Some of them waste much time during the week, being occupied, not with godless affairs, to be sure, yet not with the one thing needful. Sunday comes, and, standing in their pulpits, they are unprepared to give their people the best that is in them. Their hearers get the impression that they merely recite something because they have to, without being concerned about whether their hearers are helped by what they offer them. That is awful. The time you spend in the pulpit is most valuable; it may determine the well-being, here and hereafter, of many thousands of people. Pity the preacher who does not redeem that time by offering his hearers the very best that he is able to give. He will, unless he is in tribulation, cheerfully resolve to preach this or that truth because he is convinced that his hearers will by the testimony of the Holy Spirit be impressed if they do not harden themselves against it. I said "unless he is in tribulation"; for what can a preacher accomplish if he has no confidence in what he preaches? In times of tribulation a faithful preacher is tempted to tear up the sermon he has written. By painful experiences like these God means to humble him. But the normal condition of a preacher, after struggling and wrestling with God during the preparation of his sermon, is one of confidence; he is certain that he has a sermon to offer which will bring souls to Christ as surely as the right bait and good angling of a skilled fisherman will catch fish. If a preacher talks without plan and purpose, he need not wonder that he does not achieve his aim;

for he has none. Out upon ministers and students preparing for the ministry who go to work in a slovenly and careless manner, jotting down and reciting anything that comes into their mind, flows into their pen, and somehow leaps from their lips! That, as a rule, is what happens when the preacher extemporizes. Here I have in mind not only such as have plagiarized their entire sermon, but also those who have not adequately meditated upon the subject they intend to present to their hearers. Some preachers cannot speak with any degree of self-assurance if they have not meditated their sermon. After thorough meditation their flow of words is much better. There is a difference, too, between good judgment and genius. I am even inclined to say that a preacher must gradually become independent of his manuscript and thus give the Holy Spirit a chance to lay hold of him and suggest thoughts and words to him which had not come to him before.

The Apostle Paul writes, 2 Tim. 2, 15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." The matter of paramount importance in a sermon, then, is rightly to divide the Law and the Gospel.

Thesis XVI.

In the twelfth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the preacher tries to make people believe that they are truly converted as soon as they have become rid of certain vices and engage in certain works of piety and virtuous practises.

The great importance of this thesis becomes apparent when you reflect that a worse commingling of Law and Gospel than that which is censured in this thesis is not possible. Woe to the minister who by his manner of preaching leads his hearers to imagine that they are good Christians if they have ceased robbing and stealing, and that by and by they will get rid of any weakness still remaining in them. They turn the Gospel into Law because they represent conversion as a work of man, while genuine conversion, which produces a living faith in a person, is effected only by the Gospel.

This grossest form of commingling Law and Gospel is the most grievous fault of rationalists. The essence of their religion is to teach men that they become different beings by putting away their vices and leading a virtuous life, while the Word of God teaches us that we must become different men first, and then we

shall put away our particular sins and begin to exercise ourselves in good works. The doctrine which proposes to make men godly by their own works is the doctrine of pagans, Reformed Jews, and Turks. It proposes to empty a great river of iniquity by continually dipping up pails of water from it and expecting to reach the bottom some time. If a river of iniquity is to be dried up, the evil source from which it springs must first be stopped up, and then pure water can be led into it. Rationalists love to cite the well-known saying: Genuine repentance is to quit doing what you have been doing. The saying can be used in a right sense and has been so used by our forefathers. They meant to say: "You people who boast of having the right faith while you lead wicked lives, hush your prating about faith; quitting what you have been doing, that is genuine repentance." The meaning which rationalists connect with the saying is this: "Do not worry; what God requires of a true Christian is that he quit doing what he has been doing. That is genuine repentance." That is the abominable teaching of moralists. The Christian religion gives us the correct teaching in one word: *μετανοεῖτε,* which means: "Change your mind" or as Luther translates correctly: "Repent." (If he had rendered this word etymologically, in accordance with its derivation, he would have amazed his readers.) With this word the Lord confronts the sinner, telling him that, first of all, a change of his innermost self must take place. What He requires is a new mind, a new heart, a new spirit; not quitting vice and doing good works. By making this the primary requisite for being a Christian, He puts the ax to the root of the evil tree. Rationalism and Romanism prune the noxious tree, but for every branch which they cut off new branches sprout forth, all of them still noxious. A tree of this kind must be grafted; sound branches must be inserted into it if it is to bear different fruit.

In proof of what I have said let me submit a few Bible-texts. John 3, 3 we read: *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Nicodemus had approached the Lord with the statement: "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest except God be with him." He expects, of course, that the Lord will be pleased with such a statement from a Pharisee and will say to him: "That is excellent. Continue as you have begun." But not a word of this. Jesus slams the door of heaven shut in

Nicodemus's face and practically says to him: "I see you wish to curry favor with Me by flattery. But if you are still in your old mind, you cannot enter heaven. You will have to become a different being, you will have to be born again." Now Nicodemus reveals his mind by exclaiming: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" But the Lord repeats His previous statement and enlarges upon it: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The Lord meant to say: "All that you undertake to do while still in your carnal nature is sin; you must become spiritual before genuine spiritual fruits will begin to show themselves in your life."

Matt. 12, 33 we read: *Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruits.* Plant a good tree, and it will bear good fruit; plant a corrupt tree, and it will bear corrupt fruit. This means: Unless a person is completely changed, unless he has become a new creature, has been born anew, with a new mind, all his doings will be corrupt fruit; for by nature every man is a corrupt tree.

Matt. 15, 13 our Lord says: *"Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted will be rooted up."* Those works only which God has wrought are good. Any work which a person has produced by the power of his reason and natural will is a plant that will have to be rooted up. God will not recognize it, but demand that it be removed out of His sight as a sin and an abomination, because it has sprung from a corrupt heart, a heart that cares nothing for God. It is polluted water, flowing from a stinking fountain. True Christians know full well and need not be told that this is so: no matter what they do, even if it be ever so beautiful a performance, they are aware that it was not right, since they did not do it from love of God and their fellow-men, but in a mechanical fashion or because they wished to show off their Christianity. A Christian is quick to discern whether any work of his has been planted by God or by Adam. Any person still unable to discern this may know that he has not yet experienced *μετάνοια,* a change of heart, and that the Holy Spirit is not yet in him. The moment the Holy Spirit has entered into him, he cannot do a thing because he wishes to comply with a demand of the Law

but the Spirit will promptly inform him that the deed is worthless. He may give some one a thousand dollars, and the Spirit will urge him immediately to examine himself whether or not he was prompted toward his generous act by love of God or his fellow-man. If not, he will be told that his deed is worthless in the sight of God, nothing but sham, and that the blessing of God does not rest upon it.

Jeremiah writes, chap. 4, 3: *Thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground and sow not among thorns.* A remarkable declaration! We know its meaning well enough. Sowing wheat into ungrubbed land, soil still covered with brushwood, will not yield a harvest worth while. We must first clear the ground, remove all scrub growth, cut down the trees, or at least thin the forest sufficiently to give the sprouting seed the necessary air. That is a picturesque description of conversion. A person must first be given a new heart in conversion, and into this new heart the seed of every good work may then be sown.

1 Cor. 13, 3 the apostle says: *Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.* This remarkable passage has a particular bearing on our thesis. What is all-important are not the works themselves, but the love from which they proceed. I may be so abjectly poor that I am not able to do anything, and yet, in God's estimate I may abound in good works, if, while I am suffering poverty according to the will of God, love awakens in me the desire to do good unto all men. God takes the will for the deed. All depends on our inward love, not on our external works. Before his conversion, Paul was, "as touching the Law," without reproach; nobody could prefer a charge against him. Still he declared all his old righteousness to be dung. This does not apply to his really good works; for concerning them he says that he will receive a great reward of mercy for them.

Rom. 14, 23 Paul says: *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.* This momentous statement corroborates the declaration of the apostle quoted above that even surrendering one's body to the flames is worthless if the act does not spring from love, hence from faith; for love does not enter a person's heart except through faith. How blind, then, must a preacher be who proposes to make men godly by urging them to do good works! A person must first become godly before he can perform good works.

Even believing pastors may, without being aware of it, slip into a horrible commingling of Law and Gospel, not so much in their sermons as in their private ministrations and in the exercise of church discipline. Many pastors and congregations make mistakes in applying church discipline. They may be dealing with a drunkard who readily professes sorrow over his sins, as these people usually do. An inexperienced minister is easily deceived by such a profession. The drunkard may be suspended from church-membership and placed under surveillance for three months. Presently some brother brings the good news that the drunkard has kept himself sober all that time, and the minister decides that the drunkard is now converted, while in reality he is still quite a godless person. Beware of being deceived thus! The same may happen when a habitually profane person who has been admonished by the congregation quits cursing for a while. Or take the case of a person who is negligent in church attendance, who, therefore, certainly is not a Christian. After he has been brought before the congregation he may come to church for several successive Sundays. But does this outward act alone make him a Christian? By no means; any godless person is able to do what such a one is doing. The aforementioned persons must be made to realize that no Christian acts like them; if he does, he cannot possibly be in a state of grace. But it requires labor on the part of the minister till these persons are reborn by the Word of God. If he is unwilling to perform this labor, he neglects the souls of such persons. — Or take the case of tardy communicants who will come to the Sacrament once again after the minister has reproved them. If he is satisfied with that, he is guilty of commingling Law and Gospel. Or take the sin of avarice. A congregation may be so stingy as to refuse to take up a collection; it may fail to pay the pastor his salary. In that case the pastor must not resolve to preach his people a sharp sermon in order to open their purses. Opening purses by means of the Law is no achievement at all. He must preach in a manner that will rouse them out of their spiritual sleep and death. If he does not do that, he falls under the censure of our sixteenth thesis.

On John 3, 3, which I just cited, *Luther* comments as follows (St. L. Ed. VII, 1854): "Our doctrine, then, denounces all works as worthless and futile if the person doing them has not been born again. [Mark you: this is not Pietism, as some orthodox preachers falsely termed it, but Christianism.] For this reason we consider this the principal part of the instruction which people must be

given regarding the new birth: they must first be told that they are all spiritually dead and that any good that may be in their way of living, their monastic order, their fasting, and any other practise, will not help them a whit to obtain forgiveness of sins, until they are born again and made new creatures." Remember, if you do not tell your people this truth, if you do not wield this trusty weapon in your ministry, you will gather about you a congregation of none but legalistic Pharisees.

"Let us now hear what this new birth must be like. We base our teaching concerning it on the fact that Christ twice affirms it by an oath, saying: 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again,' etc. He means to say: You must not imagine, Nicodemus, that you will be saved because you are an honest, pious man. True, we art to lead an honest, decent, and peaceable life in this world. If we fail to live thus, Master Hans the Hangman will come along with his sword and noose and will enforce the commandments which you have broken by putting you where you can no longer break them, thus teaching you that, if you will not obey, you will have to suffer. But your good works are worthless when you begin to put this estimate on them, that they are to earn heaven for you. For these works, this goodly conduct, gain for you merely a proper living here in time and keep you out of the executioner's hands and from the gallows or from being expelled from your house and home and being separated from your wife and children. Thus, the fact that you are an honorable citizen of Jerusalem secures your life, honor, and distinction in this city. But if you wish to get to heaven and into the Church and kingdom of Christ, you must understand that you will have to become a new man. You must consider yourself an unborn infant, who is not only unable to do a single good work, but has not even attained to life and being as yet. That is what Christians preach. The Christian doctrine teaches us that we must first become different people, that is, we must be born again. How is this done? By the Holy Spirit and by the water of Baptism. After I have been born again and have been made godly and God-fearing, I begin a new life, and what I do now, in my regenerate state, is good. If Adam had remained in the state of innocence in which he had been created, he could have spent his life doing anything he pleased: fishing for trout, catching robins, or planting trees. All his doings would have been good and holy works, and there would have been no sin in them. Eve would have nursed and tended her babies, and her

works, too, would have been altogether precious and good. For her person had been created good, upright, pure, and holy, and hence all her works, her eating and drinking and everything would have been right and good. But now that man has strayed into sin and fallen from his first estate, nothing that he does is good; he sins in all that he does, even when he prays; for he does everything as a sinner. Whatever he does is wrong, even when he fasts and prays, leads the strict life of a Carthusian, puts on a monk's garb, and goes barefoot. All these things are sin because the person is evil, not having been born again; and nothing that such a person does avails him [before God].

"Accordingly, Christ tells Nicodemus practically this: I am come to preach a different doctrine about the way how to become good: you must be born again. This doctrine has been written into the Scripture aforetime, but you do not read it, or if you read it, you do not understand it; to wit, that in order to do good works a person must be born again; for sinners, being corrupt themselves, cannot but beget more sinners. Matt. 7 the Lord says: If the tree is corrupt, it does not bear good fruit. Thistles do not bear figs nor thorns, grapes."

Luther insists that in a regenerate person everything that he does is God's work. Even when he treats himself to a hearty meal, eats or sleeps, he is doing a good work, not only when he engages in hard labor. A servant of the Law may slave and slave, but all his activities are a martyrdom that is preparing him for perdition. A Christian has the right mind in all that he does; therefore all his actions are God-pleasing. From a pure fountain nothing but good, sweet water can flow.

Luther's reference to the monastic life in this connection means that, when a monk became a believer, all his doings, also his wearing of a friar's cloak, became good, because he was then acting from a right motive, being convinced that God wished him to serve in his calling.

Also the Old Testament is full of this teaching, that men must obtain a new heart and a new spirit, that their hearts must be circumcised before they can be acceptable to God. The gist of all this teaching is that Christ wants to make us godly from the root upward.

Let me give you another testimony of *Luther* from his *Sermon on the Liberty of a Christian Man,* of the year 1520. This is the treatise which Luther dedicated to the Pope. He undertook to

enlighten the Pope and told him the truth in an amazing fashion. Luther, you know, was not afraid of men, not even of the devil. During his exile at the Wartburg he was one day startled by a terrible racket, as if a hundred thousand barrels were being hurled down-stairs. He exclaimed, "What is the matter?" but checked himself immediately, saying: "Ah, it's you, devil! If I had known that, I should not even have stepped out of my room." Any other person would have been seized with a deadly fright at the thought that he was being harassed by the devil, but Luther treated the devil with contempt, knowing that he is a haughty spirit, to whom nothing is more intolerable than contempt.

Luther writes (St. L. Ed. XIX, 1003 f.): "Good and pious works never produce a good and pious person; but a good and pious person produces good and pious works. In every instance the person must first be good and pious before he can do any good work. Good works follow, and proceed from, a pious and good person, as Christ says, Matt. 7, 18: 'A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.' Now it is evident that fruits do not bear the tree, nor does the tree grow on the fruit, but the reverse — trees bear fruits, and fruits grow on trees. As there must be trees before there can be fruits, and as the fruits do not make the tree either good or corrupt, but the tree produces the fruits, even so man must first be either good or corrupt before he does good or corrupt works. His works do not make him either good or corrupt, but he does either good or corrupt works.

"We observe this in all the crafts. A good or a bad house does not make a good or a bad carpenter, but a good or bad carpenter builds a good or bad house. No work produces a master corresponding to it, but as the master, so his work. Man's works come under the same rule; according as man is either a believer or an unbeliever, his works are either good or evil, not *vice versa,* so that he would be godly and a believer according to his works. Since works do not make men believers, they do not make him godly either. But faith, which makes men godly, likewise produces good works."

These are matters which are readily understood by us now, but before Luther could sing a song like this, he had to pass through many severe conflicts. It is suprising that as early as 1520 he was able to picture the relation of works to faith as he does in the passage which I have cited.

TWENTY-NINTH EVENING LECTURE.

(May 29, 1885.)

Without question, the words which, in Rev. 3, 15. 16, Christ addressed to the bishop of the church at Laodicea are of a memorable and awful import. He said: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. So, then, because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth." We see from these words that in the infallible judgment of God it is worse to be a lukewarm than a cold minister; it is worse to be a lazy and indifferent minister, who serves in his office because it is the profession in which he is making his living, than to be manifestly ungodly. For when a minister, though not teaching or living in a plainly unchristian manner, is so sleepy, so void of all earnestness and zeal for the kingdom of God and the salvation of souls, the inevitable effect is that the poor souls of his parishioners become infected by him, and finally the entire congregation is lulled into spiritual sleep. On the other hand, when a minister leads a manifestly ungodly life and teaches ungodly doctrine, the good souls in his congregation do not follow, but turn away from him with loathing. Now, although greater damage is inflicted on the Church by the lukewarmness of a minister than by his manifest ungodliness, still both kinds of ministers will at the end of the world receive the same sentence. Both the lukewarm and the cold minister will be addressed in those awful words: "I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." Matt. 7, 23.

A faithful servant of Jesus Christ, however, will one day hear himself addressed in these words of inexpressibly glad import: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matt. 25, 21. A faithful minister must not only avoid being lukewarm or cold, he must be warm. His heart must glow with love of his Savior, Jesus, and of minister must not only avoid being lukewarm or cold, he must be be able to say with Paul and all the apostles: "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God." 2 Cor. 5, 13. This is a strange dictum. Paul says that a minister must manifest greater earnestness and zeal than the majority of the members of his congregation may like or approve. The apostle does not mean to say that in his ministry at Corinth he displayed zeal without knowledge,

Rom. 10, 2, but that he was more zealous than the Corinthians desired. Every sincere preacher and minister of Jesus Christ shows himself full of zeal and earnest determination, though he may not reap any better reward from his congregation than unpopularity, hatred, and enmity. A sincere minister will go through such experiences rather than gain any one for himself by hushing the truth, veiling it, or grinding down its sharp points.

It is an undeniable fact, then, my friends, that a minister, in particular, a really zealous minister, *has to* take his *ministry* seriously, or he commits a grievous sin. However, he can commit a grievous sin also when his presentation of Christianity and the demands which he makes upon Christians are *in excess of what the Word of God declares.* With this reflection we have arrived at our seventeenth thesis.

Thesis XVII.

In the thirteenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when a description is given of faith, both as regards its strength and the consciousness and productiveness of it, that does not fit all believers at all times.

Young ministers who are still without great experience frequently make this mistake. They desire to make an impression on their people and rouse them out of their natural security. They imagine that, in order to prevent hypocrites from regarding themselves as Christians, they cannot raise the demands which they make upon those who are Christians too high. However, here is a point where the minister must be careful not to go beyond the Word of God, or by reason of his zeal he will inflict awful harm on the souls of his hearers. Alas! Christians are in many respects quite different from the descriptions, *bona-fide* descriptions, at that, which are given of them in sermons. The minister wants to rouse his people and warn them against self-deception. However, that cannot be his *ultimate aim.* His ultimate aim must be to lead his hearers to the assurance that they have forgiveness of sins with God, the hope of the future blessed life, and confidence to meet death cheerfully. Any one who does not make these things his ultimate aim is not an evangelical minister. For this reason he must be careful, for God's sake, not to say: "Any one who does this or that is not a Christian," unless he is quite sure of his ground. Frequently a Christian may act in a very unchristian manner.

Rom. 7, 18 Paul says: *I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to*

perform that which is good I find not. It is plain that in this passage the apostle describes a Christian. How a person becomes a Christian he had described before. Next, he proceeded to show how a Christian ought to walk and to please God. In the section of his epistle from which the above passage is taken he begins to discuss the doctrine of spiritual tribulations in which Christians frequently are merged, in order to comfort them. He describes a Christian as a double being. The true Christian, he says, always desires what is good, but frequently he does not accomplish it. Now, then, if a preacher describes a Christian in such a manner as to deny that, unless he accomplishes all that is good, he does not really will what is good, the description is unbiblical. To will what is good is the main trait of a Christian. Frequently he does not progress beyond the good will to do something. Before he is aware of it, he has gone astray; the sin within him has come forth, and he is ashamed of himself. But for that reason he has not by any means fallen from grace.

Rom. 7, 14 Paul says: *For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.* He means to say: "Who would not gladly be rid of sin? As for me, I am like a slave sold to a master. I cannot get away from him; I am always being tyrannized by him." That is the condition of a Christian: he feels like a slave, with this difference, however, that he does *not* obey his master *gladly* as a *Christian* slave must obey. He renders obedience with the utmost reluctance. Accordingly, the apostle cries in v. 24: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Remember this, partly for your own comfort, partly for the task of comforting the members of your future congregation. The prevailing spiritual malady of our time is lack of assurance on the part of Christians. This is because they are not given any reliable teaching. Now, when a real Christian is shown what a miserable sinner he is, he clings to Christ all the more firmly and spurns the whispering of the devil, who tells him that he is fallen from grace and has lost God.

Phil. 3, 12 Paul says: *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.* In this life we follow after, but we do not apprehend. It may seem to a Christian that there were times when he was holier and could overcome sin better. That may actually have been the case, and his present condition may be due to his spiritual retrogression. But the correct explanation of his present state may also be this, that

he sees much more plainly now what a frail being he is. A young Christian may imagine that his heart at that particular moment is altogether pure, that he has forsaken the world, and has heaven in his heart. But he is not aware of the ravenous beasts that lie in wait for him. When the sweetmeats of his spiritual childhood cease and tribulations arise for him, he imagines that he can no longer fight against sin as he used to do. The truth is, however, that he is being attacked much more violently than before and is more keenly aware of his sinful cravings.

Gal. 5, 17 the apostle writes: *The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* According to this text a minister has no right to denounce a person as an unchristian because he is not doing all that he should, as long as the person maintains that he does not will his imperfections. If he commits sin from weakness or in rashness, he can still be a Christian.

St. James writes, chap. 3, 2: *For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man and able also to bridle the whole body.* He means to say that there is no such things as a perfect man, and by the use of the pronoun *we* he includes himself, all the apostles, and all the saints in this estimate. A Christian sins not only in thoughts, desires, gestures, and words, but also in his actions, which makes it evident to all the world that he is still a poor, weak man.

Heb. 12, 1 we read: *Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.* According to this text a Christian is always putting away sin, which besets him continually. He cannot get it out of his heart, and it makes him so very sluggish. His conduct would be quite different, he would walk cheerfully with his God like a hero, if he did not have to lug his carnal mind with him.

Is. 64, 6 we read: *We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.* The prophet does not say: All righteousnesses of the natural man are as filthy rags, but: "*all our* righteousnesses." Hence in God's eyes the life of a true Christian cannot look very beautiful. If God would not spread the cloak of Christ's righteousness over us, we should have

to be eternally damned and lost, spite of the fact that we have become true Christians.

A text that requires no comment is Job. 14, 4: *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.*

Ps. 32, 6 we read: *For this shall* EVERY ONE THAT IS GODLY *pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found.* Immediately before this text the psalmist speaks of the forgiveness of sin. He says that it is just the genuinely godly people who need to pray every day for the forgiveness of sins.

But why spend much time searching the Scriptures for proof-texts? Our Savior taught all Christians to offer up this daily petition in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses." Every day, then, puts a new burden of guilt on our heart and conscience. Now, to represent a Christian as he is not, namely, perfect, — one need not be a Methodist to do that, — or to enumerate marks of a true Christian which are not found in all Christians, means to misrepresent a Christian and will do infinite harm. For from such characterizations, Christians with a very live conscience will draw the conclusion that they are no Christians; the remarks of the minister, they say, have opened their eyes to their former delusion. This impression may become so firmly lodged in their hearts that nobody will be able to remove it. They torment themselves till their dying day with efforts to keep from falling into this or that sin, and still they commit it again and again. Therefore the minister must furnish Christians the proper remedy when they sin, namely, this, promptly to rise from their fall, provided their sin is not intentional; for an intentional sin would indeed drive the Holy Spirit from them. But a Christian learns by experience to sense danger; and when he has sinned, he feels himself urged promptly to seek his Father in heaven, confess his sin, and ask to be forgiven for Jesus' sake. He also feels inwardly assured that he has been forgiven, and even if he has no such feeling, he will say with the poet: —

> Oh, my faith shall e'er enfold Him,
> Till I come where I behold Him,
> Till my Bridegroom calls for me.

Some preachers describe the Christians as having nothing but pleasant feelings. Frequently I have observed this feature in your sermons. You will say: "Indeed, an unchristian is a miserable being. While serving the world and sin, he is pursued by furies." Now, that is not true. Many unchristians live without any qualms of conscience. "On the other hand," you will say, "a Christian —

oh, what a happy being he is! He is free from all anxiety, free from doubt," etc. All this is not so. Thousands upon thousands of Christians are, on the contrary, filled with anguish and despondency and are continually fighting with themselves and crying: "Oh, wretched man that I am!"

In your sermons you like to treat subjects like these: "The blessed state of a Christian," and the like. Well, do not forget that *the blessedness of Christians does not consist in pleasant feelings,* but in their assurance that in spite of the bitterest feelings imaginable they are accepted with God and in their dying hour will be received into heaven. *That* is indeed a great blessedness.

You can easily make a mistake here without being aware of it. You must resolve never to utter anything that is contradictory to the experience of Christians. You must search your own minds and imagine yourselves sitting among your hearers and listening to your own sermon. Suppose you were listening to another preacher, how would his question whether you are a Christians alarm you if the true state of a Christian were made contingent upon pleasant feelings and you would have to admit that you know of no such pleasant feelings? Now, is it not an awful experience for a pastor to write a sermon in condemnation of himself? to feel that he would be deadly frightened if some one were to preach to him what he purposes to preach to others? It is, indeed, proper that in your sermons you depict the happy moments which occasionally come to Christians when they are given a fortetaste of their future bliss; but you must tell your hearers at the same time that these are merely passing moments in the lives of Christians, sun-rays which once in a while find their way into their hearts. If the description of such moments of bliss is given in a proper manner, it produces neither anguish and grief nor doubt regarding one's being in the faith, but a heartfelt longing for an experience such as the preacher is describing. Especially such Christians as have fought their fight faithfully will feel that way. They lay prostrate in their spiritual distress and imagined that they were rejected by God, and, lo, then their heavenly Father was pleased to pour such celestial joy into their hearts that in their ecstasy they believed they were no longer on earth, but in heaven.

Furthermore, you must bear in mind that a Christian retains his natural temperament even after his conversion. A person with an irritable temper keeps that disposition, and it may frequently get the better of him. You must not say, then, that when a person becomes a Christian, he is turned from a bear into a lamb, in the

sense that he is willing to take scolding and scorn from everybody and is always ready to forgive his fellow-men. On the contrary, a Christian often has great trouble in keeping down his temper, and frequently he cannot control it, and nobody can quiet him. He is completely in the power of his temperament. We must not think that if this person were to die that night, he would go to perdition. While a Christian who is critically inclined indulges that thought about his brother, that brother may be on his knees in his closet, pleading with God for forgiveness and for strength to subdue his wrathful temper. He may meet the Christian who has judged him so uncharitably the next morning and sincerely ask to be forgiven for his lack of self-control.

Frequently the Christian is pictured as patient as Job. The preacher will say: "You may take everything away from a Christian, and he will cheerfully say: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord'" (Job 1, 21), and the preacher may think that his remarks have been quite Biblical. Job did indeed say those words, but not all Christians say them. It is not consistent with truth to set up such a claim in a sermon. Many a Christian grows impatient in trouble. His impatience may become violent even over trifling matters. When he spiritually comes to again, as it were, he is ashamed of himself.

It cannot be said to be a criterion of a Christian that he never commits a gross sin. That does happen occasionally; but whenever this is the case, the Christian surrenders unconditionally to the Word of God, even though he may not do so immediately. He may at first be so blinded by the devil that he believes he is right. Finally, however, God's Word convinces him that he was wrong, and then he humbly asks forgiveness, while a hypocrite persists as long as he can in the claim that he has done right.

Many preachers picture the Christian as a person who does not fear death. That is a serious misrepresentation, because the great majority of Christians are afraid to die. If a Christian does not fear death and declares that he is ready to die at any time, God has bestowed a special grace upon him. Some have expressed this sentiment before their physician told them that they would not live another night, but after that they were seized with a terrible fear.

Do not, for God's sake, draw a false picture of a Christian; but whenever you have drawn the picture of a Christian, see whether you can recognize yourself in that picture.

Even pride in a very pronounced form can crop out in a Christian, and that is one of the worst vices, because it is a transgression of the First Commandment. By nature we are all proud; only one is more strongly inclined to that sin than another. Persons of a choleric temperament, possessing what is called a strong will and great energy, as a rule, have a great deal of self-confidence and expect others to show them reverential regard — a result of abominable pride. This sin sometimes crops out even in true Christians. Observe the disciples of the Lord quarreling with one another about who was the greatest among them. If this incident had not been recorded in the Bible, we could hardly believe that the apostles quarreled like children about their superiority and that the mother of Zebedee's sons requested that one of them be placed at the right and the other at the left hand of the Lord. From the account in Luke we gather that the disciples were ill at ease during this quarrel because they knew that their conduct was shameful, and when the Lord rebuked them, they felt so deeply ashamed that they would have liked to hide themselves.

Again, it is wholly incorrect and false to picture the Christian as being always fervent in prayer and as if praying were his most cherished occupation. It is not so; it takes much struggling on the part of the Christian to make him fit for prayer, fervent in it, and confident that he will really obtain from God what he is praying for. That is the reason why the Lord's Prayer, which is recited so often, has been called the greatest martyr on earth. Christians are no exception to the rule. True, if a person, as a rule, merely babbles the Lord's Prayer, without knowing what he is saying, he is certainly not a Christian. A Christian who becomes aware of his lack of attention during prayer feels deeply humiliated and promptly starts the Lord's Prayer over again. Though there are times when the Christians' flesh and blood are forced into the background and they feel as if they were dissolving in happiness, as if they were in heaven and conversing with God, they nevertheless retain their natural flesh and blood.

Christians are even tempted with the desire to grow rich. Merchants, in particular, are in great danger of turning misers. If they were not warned and admonished, they would be dragged into perdition as if caught in a snare, and would be lost forever.

In judging any person, it is of decisive importance to know whether he loves the Word of God and his Savior or whether he is hardened and leads a shameful life. There are people who want to make a show of great sanctity by avoiding conversation, raising their

eyes piously to heaven, citing Scripture continually, and reading their Bible in leisure hours, preferably in retirement, in order to impress people with their exemplary Christianity. By this show "the heavenly prophets" succeeded in deceiving good Melanchthon. We must not think that only those are true Christians who make a display of godliness. I do not assert that every one of these people is an unchristian, but I am sure that such as are wholly given to the aforementioned practises are miserable hypocrites. Read the gospels and note how the disciples conversed with the Lord and how they acted in His presence. They expressed their minds plainly, even John, the beloved disciple. Christ did not for that reason denounce them as unconverted, but treated them as converted people who, however, still carried a pretty vigorous portion of the Old Adam with them.

You may, in your sermons, refer to actions of *strong* or exceptionally *faithful* Christians. It will not harm your hearers to think that they have not yet attained to such a degree of faithfulness; it will rather prove an incentive to them to make better progress in their Christianity.

When new members are to be received into the congregation and you have to talk to them, you must not regard them as godless, unconverted people if they do not immediately engage in a religious conversation with you. There are people who cling to their Savior, but are unable to talk much about their faith, although on other topics they may be ready talkers. Others, again, may not have much experience as regards spiritual affairs and for that reason may not be able to say much.

In conclusion let me submit a citation from Luther's *Church Postil.* He says (St. L. Ed. XII, 911 ff.): "That explains why St. Paul admonishes his Christians to such an extent as to make it appear as though he were overdoing it; for in all his epistles he is so determined about inculcating these matters upon them as if they were so stupid and ignorant, so inattentive and forgetful, that of themselves they did not know them and would not do them, but only on being told and urged to do them. He knows that, although Christians have made a beginning of faith and are at that stage where they are to show forth the fruits of their faith, still they have not yet done so, nor have they finished their task. Accordingly, it will not do to think and say that it is sufficient to preach the doctrine to them and that, where the Spirit and faith are at work, the fruits of faith and good works will follow of themselves. For though the Spirit is present and, as Christ says, operates in believers

and makes them willing, still the flesh, on the other hand, is also present, and the flesh is always weak and tardy; moreover, the devil never rests, but tries, by tribulations and temptations, to cause the Christian to slip and fall because of the weakness of his flesh, etc.

"For this reason we must not treat our hearers as if they were in no need of being admonished and urged by God's Word to lead a godly life. Beware of negligence and laziness in discharging this duty! For the flesh is slothful enough to obey the spirit, as Paul says, Gal. 5, 17: 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit, . . . so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.' Therefore God must act like a good and diligent manager of an estate or magistrate who has a lazy servant or slothful officials under him, although in other respects they are not unfaithful or wicked. Such a one must not think that, when he has issued one or two orders, the task that he wants done is accomplished; he must be continually after his workmen and urge them to do their work.

"Likewise, we have not yet reached the point where our flesh and blood would be active and leap forward with sheer joy and delight to do good works and obey God, such as our spirit desires and our faith demands; on the contrary, with all our incessant urging and prodding we can scarcely get them to move. What would happen if we were to quit our admonitions and our urging and assume — as many secure spirits do — that everybody knows well enough what he has to do, having heard his duties recited to him so many years and having even taught them to others, etc.? I believe that, if preaching and admonition were to cease for a year, we should become worse than the worst heathen."

THIRTIETH EVENING LECTURE.

(June 5, 1885.)

Many young men whom God has endowed with splendid gifts, gifts especially suited for the office of the ministry, and who even have a certain inclination toward that office, nevertheless do not like to become ministers. They think that in this office they would have to sacrifice their life's happiness and their freedom. However, this is a great self-delusion. Any one who wishes to be saved must be ready, if Christ so desires, to sacrifice his life's happiness and surrender his freedom for His sake. Not only a minister, but every Christian must choose the narrow path, which leads to heaven, if he wants to get to heaven. He must forsake the world, fight

against his flesh and crucify it, and work out his salvation with fear and trembling if he does not want to perish eternally. Accordingly, a young man does not gain any or only a small advantage for his lustful flesh by refusing to become a minister. Every Christian must be a spiritual priest, even if he is not a minister, if he does not wish to thrust the grace of God from him. It is indeed true that a person who wishes to become a minister must first be a sincere Christian. That is the *conditio sine qua non,* the indispensable requisite, for becoming a minister. The Apostle Paul concludes his enumeration of the qualities required for a bishop, or, what amounts to the same, a minister, with these words: "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." 1 Tim. 3, 9. This shows that a minister must have a purified conscience, cleansed not only by the blood of Christ unto the forgiveness of sins, but also by the sanctification of the Spirit. A minister must have come to the momentous decision that he will not live for himself, but for Him who died and rose again for his sake. At his ordination, when he is separated from the world for service in the sanctuary, a minister must have bidden farewell to the world and become irrevocably divorced from it. He must have reached the conviction which the pious poet has thus expressed: —

My heart, now make thy choice:
On Him stake thy reliance,
Or thou'lt not come to rest
Renounce the world and all
That does thy flesh enthrall;
With Jesus take thy stand
And thus the matter end.

Blessed are you, my dear friends, if you make the poet's words: "With Jesus take thy stand And thus the matter end," the sighing of your heart. Not until you do this, will you "end the matter."

Accordingly, it is a real and a great misfortune when a congregation obtains an orthodox, but unconverted minister, who, though he has grasped the pure doctrine quite well with his intellect and memory, does not believe what he preaches. Such a minister, having the pure doctrine, will, as a rule, lead his congregation to good pastures in his pulpit work, but he will be a sorry watchman and curate of souls and a still sorrier example to his flock. His congregation will not at all behold in him the portrait of a Christian who has renounced himself and the world. If it is to his advantage, he will indeed adhere to the pure doctrine and even fight bravely to maintain it, but if a situation arises that brings him into contempt or yields him ingratitude as a reward for his zeal; if he has to suffer dishonor and persecution for the sake of the pure doctrine, he will speedily fall away from it, and it will be ap-

parent that his Christianity sprang from a corrupt root and that his congregation has obtained a cheat. For in times of tribulations, when wolves and foxes try to break into the flock, it is of paramount importance that the shepherd take a firm stand and be ready to give his life, to shed his blood, for the truth and for his flock. An unconverted person would consider it ridiculous to sacrifice a pleasant living in a nice position with a snug income for what he considers a subtile point of doctrine, because he has never yet had a perception of the right connections of the parts of the saving doctrine. When the question is, not about doctrines objectively or speculatively considered, but about teachings which in a purely practical view belong to the true knowledge and experience of the heart, an orthodox minister of this type will talk like a blind man about color. At times he will have an exaggerated view of genuine Christianity; at other times he will entertain an unduly inferior view of it. We have seen at our last meeting how Law and Gospel can be confounded by an exaggerated view of Christianity. To-night we shall hear how a minister can place genuine Christianity on a lower level than its essential quality requires.

Thesis XVIII.

In the fourteenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the universal corruption of mankind is described in such a manner as to create the impression that even true believers are still under the spell of ruling sins and are sinning purposely.

You will observe that I am speaking of the claim that the universal corruption of mankind embraces living in dominant and wilful sins on the part of believers. No one who is conversant with the pure doctrine will make the unqualified assertion that a Christian can be a fornicator and an adulterer. Such a thought would not enter the mind of a true teacher of the Word of God. But a preacher trying to give a very drastic description of the universal corruption of mankind is easily tempted to deviate from the pure doctrine. I am speaking of mistakes that are frequently made by zealous ministers and also by theological students. In their first sermons submitted for review they quite frequently say that all mankind lives in this or that sin, mentioning manifest sins unto death as though Christians also were living in sins of that kind. What damage can be done when people are made to hear that we human beings are living in every abomination, shame, and vice, without the qualifying statement: "as we are by nature" or: "as

long as a person is still in the state of natural depravity and is unregenerate." With these qualifiers, of course, you cannot overdraw the horrible qualities of man's natural condition. However, when addressing a Christian congregation, you will have to be very careful not to speak as if also all Christians were living in shame and vice. It was a harmful and dangerous attempt on the part of the Pietists to divide mankind into so many classes that nobody was able to tell in which class he belonged. But this must not keep us from pointing out in our sermons the two great classes into which mankind is really divided, *viz.*, believers and unbelievers, godly and ungodly, converted and unconverted, regenerate and unregenerate persons. This classification is current throughout the Scriptures. Christ always preached: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16, 16. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Matt. 9, 13. God "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matt. 5, 45. In each one of these texts Christ recognizes only two classes of human beings. Matt. 13, 38 He speaks of "the children of the Kingdom" and "the children of the Wicked One," of wheat and tares. This thorough division, this *aut—aut,* either—or, must appear in every sermon of a sincere preacher. This is what your hearers must learn, *viz.*, that they are either spiritually dead or spiritually alive, either converted or unconverted, either under the wrath of God or in a state of grace, either Christians or unchristians, either asleep in sin or quickened unto a new life in God, subjects in either the devil's or God's kingdom. It is a damnable heresy to speak of Hades, as modern theologians do, where man will have another chance to be converted. Incalculable harm is done by this doctrine. May God keep you from embracing it!

Make plain to your hearers in all your sermons that there are but two goals at the end of this life — heaven and hell. There will be only two sentences pronounced on men, either unto damnation or unto eternal life. Accordingly, there are only two classes of men in the present life; those of the one class are headed direct for hell, those of the other, straight for heaven. For Christ says distinctly: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matt. 7, 13. 14. There are but two gates, two roads, and two terminals. To confound the two classes of men that are

concerned in these two ways is an abominable mingling of Law and Gospel. The Law produces reprobate sinners, the Gospel free and blessed men.

Although the matter is as clear as daylight, still, since it is so easy, when one pictures "*what abominable* sinners we are who need the Savior," to fall into error in spite of our good intention, let us hear a few Bible-texts on this subject. When you speak of "abominable" sinners, you must not refer to Christians, in whom we find, on the one hand, weaknesses, which are covered with the righteousness of Christ, and, on the other hand, good deeds, which God does through them and which are pleasing to Him. Every Christian may apply to himself the declaration of God: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3, 17.

Rom. 6, 14 we read: *For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the Law, but under grace.* What the apostle actually says in this text is that sin shall not be able to dominate Christians. It is absolutely impossible that a person who is in a state of grace should be ruled by sin. A pilgrim traveling on a lonely road, when attacked by a highway man, escapes from him at the first opportunity. He does not want to be overcome and slain. Christians are pilgrims through this world on their way to heaven. The devil, like a highway robber, assaults them, and they go down before him because of their weakness, not because they meant to go down. To a true Christian his fall is forgiven because he turns to God in daily repentance with tears or at least heartfelt sighings for pardon. If a person allows sin to rule him, this is a sure sign that he is not a Christian, but a hypocrite, no matter how pious he pretends to be.

1 Cor. 6, 7—11 we read: *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.* No one, then, who falls into the aforementioned sins and fails to repent of them shall inherit the kingdom of God. The Christian's repentance consists in this, that he desires to commit these sins no more. Whoever commits these sins intentionally has, by that token, a proof that he is not a Christian, but a reprobate, who is moved, not by the Spirit of God, but by the hellish spirit.

2 Pet. 2, 20—22 the apostle writes: *For if, after they have*

escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. With this important passage we confront the Calvinists, in particular, who say that a person who has once obtained faith can never lose it. The Apostle Peter is here speaking of persons who had been children of God, had had a living knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and had been in a state of divine grace. How, then, can any one be so bold as to assert that a person who had been truly converted, stays converted even when, like Peter and David, he falls into some particular sin?

Rom. 8, 13. 14 we are told: *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* The apostle does not say: "Never mind your sinning. God will keep you in His grace and bring you around again"; but he says: "If you live after the flesh, you shall die. As many as are led by *the Spirit* of God, *they* are the sons of God." That means, *per contra,* that those who are not led by the Spirit of God, but by their flesh, are not the children of God, but servants of Satan.

Gal. 5, 19—21 Paul writes: *Now, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* Stop and consider this passage. In view of this text, is it not shocking in men who want to pass for Christian theologians to say that men can be in a state of grace while living in abominable sins such as are named in this text? This text locks the kingdom of God against them and announces to them the judgment of God.

Eph. 5, 5. 6 the same apostle writes: *For this ye know, that no whoremonger nor unclean person nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. The apostle's warning, "Let no man deceive you," means: Do not listen to those who tell you the contrary. Unbelievers will be damned for the reason that they live in sins like the above. Consider, then, that, if you were to live in the same sins, you would share their fate in perdition. — This Paul asks the Ephesians to ponder.

I wish to call your attention to the fact that passages like those which I quoted, are found in the pericopes. They should prove valuable to you when you use them for a lively presentation of the doctrine now under discussion. I am always pained when I attend church and find that these splendid texts are not used for the sermon. You ought to form the resolution that, when the particular time for a pericope containing these texts arrives, you will expound them to your hearers and tell them that, as God lives, they will be damned if they live in this or that sin. If you only tell them that Christians remain sinners until they die, you will frequently be misunderstood. Some will lull themselves to sleep with the reflection that they are poor and frail human beings, but that they have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, — however, a lip faith.

Let me urge upon you in general to take a survey of the pericopes on which you are going to preach and to note beforehand particular passages that suggest subjects to you on which you feel you ought to preach. If you wait till Wednesday or Thursday with looking up the pericope for the coming Sunday and after a superficial reading decide on some topic which will yield you eight pages of manuscript, sufficient for a talk of forty-five minutes, you act like an abominable hireling. A faithful pastor begins on Sunday evening to consider the subject of his sermon for the coming Sunday and determines fully to redeem the precious minutes during which he will face his congregation. The only thing that will keep him from following this practise is a visit he has to make or receive on Sunday evening. He delights in storming now this, now that stronghold of the devil. True, he will not achieve the overthrow of every one of these strongholds, but it must be his earnest intention to do so; otherwise many will continue in their spiritual misery under sin, and he will have *himself* to blame for it. If you do what divine grace enables you to do, the Savior will not put you to shame on account of your deficiencies, but will graciously reward you in the end with the crown of glory. To strengthen the conviction which I am trying to produce in you, let me cite a testimony from the *Smalcald Articles*, Part III, Art. 4, §§ 42—45 (Mueller,

p. 319; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 491): "On the other hand, if certain sectarists were to arise, some of whom are perhaps already extant, and in the time of the insurrection of the peasants came under my own observation, holding that all those who had once received the Spirit or the forgiveness of sins or had become believers, even though they should afterwards sin, would still remain in the faith and such sin would not harm them, and hence crying thus: 'Do whatever you please; if you believe, it all amounts to nothing; faith blots out all sins,' etc., — they say, besides, that, if any one sins after he has received faith and the Spirit, he never truly had the Spirit of faith: I have had before me, seen and heard, many such insane men, and I fear that in some such a devil is still remaining.

"It is, accordingly, necessary to know and teach that, when holy men, still having and feeling original sin, also daily repenting of and striving with it, happen to fall into manifest sins [mortal sins, which everybody recognizes as such], as David into adultery, murder, and blasphemy, that then faith and the Holy Spirit has departed from them. For the Holy Ghost does not permit sin to have dominion, to gain the upper hand, so as to be accomplished, but represses and restrains it, so that it must not do what it wishes. But if it does what it wishes, the Holy Ghost and faith are certainly not present. For St. John says, First Epistle 3, 9: 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, . . . and he cannot sin.' And yet it is also the truth when the same St. John says, First Epistle 1, 8: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'"

Now, lest you think that we are vainly arguing about self-evident matters and to prove that the Calvinists have received into their doctrinal system the error rejected in our thesis, I wish to cite from the decrees of the *Synod of Dort* the following statement: "God, who is rich in mercy, according to His immutable purpose of election, *does not wholly remove the Holy Spirit from His own even when they sin grievously*, nor does He permit them to fall entirely out of the grace of adoption as children of God and out of the state of justification." Now, any one who falls into a mortal sin slips back entirely into the state of sin. According to the confession of the Reformed, then, Peter, David, and others were justified sinners while they committed mortal sins, remained in a state of grace as children of God, and retained the Holy Spirit. This we reject, while we indeed assert that the elect *cannot until their death* remain in a reprobate state, otherwise they could not be elect.

THIRTY-FIRST EVENING LECTURE.

(June 12, 1885.)

The fact that sin exists and the question how it originated are two of the greatest problems with which the mind of man is wrestling. Even the more serious philosophers of pagan antiquity were occupied with this highly important and grave subject. Being ignorant of the fact that God, at the beginning, created man perfectly good according to His image and that man soon after, having been misled by the devil, fell from his first estate, they naturally could not discover the awful character of sin and its origin. As a rule, they did not proceed farther in their reasoning than to say that sin is an innate weakness and frailty of man. Others, like Zoroaster, Manes, and many of the Gnostics, wishing to push their inquiry further, asserted a twofold primeval principle, or primeval essence, one good, the other evil. They claimed that what is good in man was derived from the good, what is evil in him, from the evil principle. But after all is told, they did not perceive the terrible abomination that sin is.

It is a pity that even in the midst of Christendom there are people without number, both baptized and unbaptized, who do not know what sin is. Some, like the rationalists, claim that man is naturally good and becomes evil and sinful only through evil examples, wrong education, and sensual enticements which he has not the strength to resist steadfastly. Others, like the pantheists, atheists, and materialists, claim that sinning is in no way worse than eating when you are hungry or drinking when you are thirsty; it is merely satisfying a natural craving. The majority of them go still further, claiming that sin has been the indispensably necessary means by which man has developed his self-consciousness. The notorious philosopher Hegel says right out that without the fall into sin, Paradise would have been nothing but a zoological garden; so necessary he considers sin. He is unable to conceive that sin might be injurious; on the contrary, he treats it as the transition from the state of barbarism to that of self-conscious thinking.

This blindness concerning sin is the chief cause of the almost universal rejection of the Gospel in our time. People who fail to recognize the horrible nature of sin will decline to accept the sacrificial death of the Son of God for the reconciliation and redemption of this world of sinners; for they consider it utterly unnecessary and hence regard the story of the Gospel as a miserable fable.

It is therefore one of the most important requisites of a true, evangelical minister that he know how to depict for his hearers the true nature of sin in terms that are as plain and distinct as they are terrible, drastic, and impressive. For without a real knowledge of what an awful thing sin is man cannot understand and accept the Gospel. As long as he is not alarmed over sin as his greatest enemy and the most awful abomination indwelling in him, he will not come to Christ. Still less, of course, can there be a proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel without a true and adequate knowledge of sin. This leads us to our next thesis.

Thesis XIX.

In the fifteenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the preacher speaks of certain sins as if they are not of a damnable, but of a venial nature.

Unless you ponder the highly important matter now before us well, you will lack much of the clear vision that you ought to have for the proper discharge of the ministerial office.

We have already seen that a distinction must be made between mortal and venial sins. A person failing to make this distinction does not rightly divide Law and Gospel. But the distinction between these two kinds of sin must be made with great care. It must be clearly shown that the distinction is made for the purpose of proving that certain sins expel the Holy Ghost from the believer. When the Holy Spirit is driven out, faith, too, is ejected; for no one can come to faith nor retain it without the Holy Ghost. Sins which expel the Holy Ghost and bring on spiritual death are called *mortal sins*. Any one who has been a Christian will readily perceive when the Holy Spirit has departed from him by his inability to offer up childlike prayers to God and to resist sin stoutly and bravely as he used to do. He will feel as if he had become chained to sin, like a slave. It is a good thing if he has at least this knowledge of his condition, for thus he may be brought back to God. But while this condition endures, he is not in communion with God.

Venial sins are termed such as a Christian commits without forfeiting the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They are sins of weakness or rashness; frequently they are called the daily sins of Christians.

While inculcating this distinction upon our hearers, we must be scrupulously careful not to create the notion in them that venial sins are sins about which a person need not be greatly concerned

and for which he does not have to ask forgiveness. A preacher who leads his hearers to entertain this view becomes the cause of their perdition. He makes them carnally secure and drives the fear of God from their hearts. That is not the true evangelical way of preaching about these sins, nor is it, in general, a true evangelical notion that only he is a real evangelical preacher who does not preach the Law a great deal. Both the Law and the Gospel must be preached, the one in its sternness, the other in its sweetness. A preacher who does not preach both does not deserve the name of an evangelical minister, but is a false leader and is sowing the Gospel as if he were casting wheat into the ocean, where no crop can be raised. It happens only too often that preachers, when speaking of the distinction between venial and mortal sins, create the impression that to Christians venial sins are matters over which they need not worry. Since all are sinners and no one ever gets rid of sin entirely, there is no reason why one should feel disturbed because of these sins. A talk of that kind is really awful and ungodly.

Matt. 5, 18. 19 the Lord says: *Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* This is one of the most awful sayings found in Scripture. The Lord does not say: "He shall *be* the least," but: "He shall *be called* the least." "The least" means the most reprobate, or one whom God does not acknowledge as His own. That will be the *sentence* passed on him in the kingdom of God and Christ. Therefore you should with trembling approach the task of preaching both the Gospel and the Law. Do not speak of one jot of the Law, of one of the so-called least commandments, as of something about which a Christian need not be greatly concerned.

The connection in which the Lord uttered these words is worthy of note. In the words preceding them He states that He is come to fulfil the Law. Now, inasmuch as the Lord had to fulfil every law and every commandment in our stead, it is shocking in any man, poor, sinful worm that he is, to want to dispense with a single law of God and to treat it as a matter of no importance. Those who entertain notions of this kind are no Christians. If any man has manufactured for himself some secret comfort from this notion, he has miserably belied and cheated himself. Also in this matter

a true Christian manifests himself as a person who fears to commit a single sin.

The Lord also speaks of a person "who shall *teach* men so." It is bad enough when a person for his own part disregards some law and leads a careless life; but it is much worse when he preaches his lax views and leads men to perdition by his preaching. He will have to render an account to God of his preaching, and on that day he may not excuse himself by claiming that it was only trifling matters which he had represented as so unimportant that no one need grieve over them. A Christian grieves even over trifles, but unchristians imagine that they can "escape by iniquities," Ps. 56, 7. [Luther: "What evil we do is already forgiven."] That is the slogan of the wicked, just as it is the easy-going way of unconverted people to speak of their iniquities thus: "Well, I can easily make amends, and grass will soon grow over it." No grass will ever grow over anything for which forgiveness has not been asked of God.

Matt. 12, 36 Christ says: *I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the Day of Judgment.* By a concrete example we are shown in this text how abominable it is to speak of sins which are in themselves venial and are automatically remitted by God, because He does not regard them as a great evil. Those who speak thus represent God, the Holy and Righteous, as a feeble, old man, like Eli, who saw his sons sin and merely said, "Nay, my sons!" 1 Sam. 2, 24, thinking that therewith he had done his full duty. True, God is Love, but He is also Holiness and Righteousness. To the person who rises up against Him God becomes a terrible fire, and His fiery wrath pursues the sinner into the lowest hell. Let men of the world ridicule and scorn this teaching, they will have to pay dearly for their laughter, like the people of Sodom, Gen. 19. Any evil word for which a sinner is tried on Judgment Day is sufficient for his condemnation. Now, is there a Christian who can say at the end of a day on which he has spoken much that he has not uttered a single idle word? Few Christians will be able to say that. Even for an idle word Christians must ask God's pardon with a contrite heart and promise to guard their lips better in the future. If God were not to forgive their idle words, these alone would damn them. There is no sin venial in itself; but there are such sins as will not hinder a person from still believing in Jesus Christ with all his heart.

Jas. 2, 10 we read: *Whosoever shall keep the whole Law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* Let us assume that Scripture contained a thousand commandments. In reality there are more than a thousand, because those that have been recorded state only general principles, for which we are to find the applications. Now, according to this text, if a person had kept nine hundred and ninety-nine out of the thousand commandments, he would be guilty of the whole Law. That applies to every one of the so-called venial sins. Unless a Christian clearly understands this fact, he ceases to be a Christian. What constitutes a person a Christian is this believing knowledge, that he is, in the first place, a miserable, accursed sinner, who would be lost forever if Christ had not died for him; and that, in the second place, Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, has redeemed him, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won him from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil. A Christian must regard himself as a lost and condemned sinner, or all his talk about faith is vain and worthless.

Gal. 3, 10 Paul writes: *For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.* The curse recorded in this clear passage will descend on every one that does not continue to do *all* things that are written in the Book of the Law. Hence there can be no sin that is venial by its nature. Sins are venial only for Christ's sake.

1 John 1, 7 we read: *The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.* The apostle says "from all sin," not "from all mortal sins, all grievous sins, all gross sins." Hence, the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, must have been required also for canceling the so-called venial sins. That being so, venial sins *in themselves* must also be mortal sins. Sin is something awful, because it is *ἀνομία,* lawlessness. It is rebellion against the holy, omnipotent God, our supreme, heavenly Lawgiver. When a sinner adds wilfulness to his act, he tears down the manifesto which a king has had posted in public and tramples upon it. In an unlimited monarchy the punishment for such a crime is death. We may not have torn down the Law of God publicly, but are daily acting contrary to it. For this we are to *express* our heartfelt *regret.* A true Christian is not like a brazen criminal who carries his head high; he is not hard-hearted, but contrite. If he is reminded of any word that God has spoken, he accepts it im-

mediately with due humility. Anybody may utter a warning or a rebuke to a Christian, and it will be accepted. Occasionally he may resist for a moment and, as Luther puts it, allow the devil to ride him, but unless he is beside himself and for a while does not see that his conduct is unchristian and ungodly, he soon feels a fire burning in him, and it will not take long before he begs God and men for forgiveness. Without a broken spirit a person may talk ever so much about the Christian faith; it is all worthless, as he is in the power of sin. Let us, then, continue to believe that sin, no matter what its character may be, is never venial in itself. For anything that has been done contrary to the Law, the Law has to condemn the doer.

A cognate text is Matt. 5, 21. 22: *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the Judgment. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the Judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.* Is there a Christian who need not blame himself for having been angry at his brother, even though it was not for a long time? It was done in weakness; nevertheless he has committed a sin of which he has to be ashamed. When Christ says: "He is in danger of the Judgment," He treats anger and murder alike. The term "raca" signifies that anger in the heart breaks forth in angry words and gestures. It reaches its worst stage when the angry person cries, "Thou fool!" The Law promptly consigns such an angry person to hell-fire.

All these texts prove that the so-called venial sins are not venial in themselves, in their nature, but damnable, mortal sins. Only of the believer it is written: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," Rom. 8, 1; but a believer is the very person who regards sin as a very serious matter.

Lest you imagine that no one could possibly preach this false doctrine concerning venial sins, let me cite what the papists teach in the *Roman Catechism* (II, 5, Qu. 46): "All mortal sins must be told to the priest. For venial sins, which do not separate us from divine grace and into which we fall rather frequently, may be properly confessed for a person's ease of mind; . . . but they may also be withheld from the priest with impunity and may be atoned for in many different ways. Mortal sins, however, . . . must be rehearsed one by one; . . . for it is their nature to inflict a more grievous wound on the soul than those sins which men are in the

habit of committing freely and publicly." Here you have the anti-christian doctrine that no absolution is required for venial sins. It is naively expressed, but it reveals an abysmal iniquity and draws down upon the papists the sentence of the Lord: "He shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5, 19.

Over against this teaching *Kromayer* writes (*Theol. posit.-polem. I*, p. 511): "There is no sin that in its nature is venial. We must steer a middle course between the Roman Scylla and the Calvinistic Charybdis."

Among venial sins the Romanists number sinful desires that do not materialize in acts. However, shameful libertines may not carry into action the abominable fantasies in which they delight while lying in their beds; they may shrink from executing them because of the notoriety that would follow, but they must be told that they are living in mortal sins. Trifles, such as stealing a pin, are treated by Romanists as venial sins. I remember that my parents impressed on us children that we must not even steal a pin. It is well if parents train their children to a scrupulous fear of the least wrong-doing, because it would be regarded as a serious matter by their father and might rouse his anger.

Let me cite a statement of *Socius* in his *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (p. 448): "It seems to be certain that in a person who otherwise confesses the faith of Christ with his heart *one* sinful act cannot have the effect of consigning him to eternal death. When we are told concerning sins unto death, the reference cannot be to a *single* sin, but to habitual sinning." According to Socinian teaching we need not ask God's forgiveness for an occasional sinful slip. Sin, according to this view, does not exclude a person from the kingdom of God unless it becomes a vicious habit.

Let me submit a few testimonies from the writings of *Luther*. I shall cite, first, a passage from his *Exposition of the Theses Discussed at Leipzig* (St. L. Ed. XVIII, 833 ff.). The second thesis which Luther maintained reads: "To deny that a person sins even in his good deeds, that *venial sins are such not by their nature*, but solely by the mercy of God, or that sin remains in an infant also after baptism, means to trample Paul and Christ under foot." Luther comments on this thesis as follows: "Accordingly, it is another grievous error of the theologians that they manifest hardly any concern about venial sins and prate that a venial sin does not offend God, at least only to a pardonable degree. If venial sins are such trifling sins, why is it that even the righteous are scarcely saved? Why can the righteous not endure the judgment of God

and be declared righteous? Why are we urged with such earnestness, and in no trifling or figurative sense, to pray: 'Forgive us our trespasses; Thy will be done; Thy kingdom come; Hallowed be Thy name'? Is it not manifest that these miserable theologasters first extinguish the fear of God in men and then make soft pillows for people's arms and heads, as Ezekiel says (chap. 13, 18), dispense them from this prayer, and quench the Spirit? Spite of all they may say, it is not a trifling matter to depart from the Law and will of God a hairbreadth, nor is the mercy of God which pardons venial sins a trifling matter. These people, then, treat the Law and the will and the mercy of God as something ineffectual, and the result is that the prayer of the righteous is not fervent, nor is their gratitude kindled. Let us beware of this pharisaical leaven!"

Again, *Luther* writes, in his exposition of the *Theses Concerning Indulgences, against Tetzel,* of the year 1518, in his comment on Thesis 76 (St. L. Ed. XVIII, 260): "Here I should have expatiated on venial sin, which is lightly regarded nowadays, as if it were not a sin at all, to the great harm of many people, I fear, who are securely snoring away in their sins and are not aware that they are committing gross sins. I confess that during all my reading of the scholastic teachers I have never understood what a venial sin is, nor how great it is. I do not know whether they understand these things themselves. I want to state briefly: Any person who is *not in constant fear of being full of mortal sins and does not act accordingly, will scarcely be saved.* For Scripture says, Ps. 143, 2: 'Enter not into judgment with Thy servant.' Not only venial sins, as they are nowadays called by everybody, but even good works cannot bear the scrutiny of God's judgment, but are in need of pardoning mercy. For the psalmist does not say: Enter not into judgment with Thine enemy, but: 'with Thy servant' and Thy child that is serving Thee. This fear ought to teach us to sigh for the mercy of God and to trust in it. Where this fear is lacking, we trust not so much in the mercy of God as in our own conscience and in the fact that we are not conscious of having committed any gross sins. *Such people will meet with a fearful judgment.*"

Evangelical preaching means that sin must be magnified. The minister must pronounce a severe judgment on sin, for He is to proclaim the judgment of God. Also venial sins you must not regard lightly. You must remember that you sin so much every day that God would have to cast you into hell, but that He will not do it because you believe in Christ. Always remind yourselves that, if God were to deal with you according to His justice, you would

belong in hell, not on a pleasant couch. You are to be in such fear and behave in such a way as if you were full of deadly trespasses. It is awful to hear one say nonchalantly: "Now my conscience is at ease." It is certainly a pitiful condition for a person to be in, *viz.*, to have an unconcerned conscience while the Word of God pronounces condemnation upon him.

Dannhauer, in his *Hodosophia* (p. 195), uttered an important axiomatic truth by saying: "Sin is as great as He is who is offended by it." Since God is offended by sin, there is in sin an immeasurable wickedness and an immeasurable guilt.

Finally, Christian experience also proves that in its nature no sin is venial. Any true Christian will tell you this to be his experience, that, as soon as he had sinned, he felt an unrest, which continued until he had asked God for forgiveness. In every true Christian the conscience promptly rings an alarm. A Christian merchant becomes restless over five cents in his receipts that do not belong to him. A Christian is reproved by his conscience for wrongdoing when he has treated a brother discourteously or in loveless fashion. For the slightest offense which he has given by his sinful conduct he apologizes, and he has no rest until he has done so. Is not that remarkable? It shows that venial sins, too, are something evil, a fire that may be kindled for our perdition. *Small sins become great when they are regarded as small.*

THIRTY-SECOND EVENING LECTURE.

(June 19, 1885.)

My Dear Friends: —

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Rationalism rushed in upon the so-called Protestant Church with the force of a spring-tide. In the lecture halls of universities it was held up as a new and great light to young theologians, who afterwards preached it to the common people as true Christianity — Christianity purified. Thus Rationalism gradually became the dominant type of religion. The inevitable consequence was that the conviction that it is not a matter of indifference whether a person is a Lutheran or a Reformed or a Catholic vanished completely. The small remnant of sincere Christians who still believed and confessed with their mouths that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, that man is justified before God by faith in Christ alone, — these few Christians ex-

tended to each other the right hand of brotherly fellowship, like persons saved from a great shipwreck, who, having seen most of their fellow-passengers go down to a watery grave, now embrace each other with tears of joy though they had been perfect strangers before. In this state of affairs the thought had to arise in all hearts that the time had come for putting an end to the abominable church quarrels (that is what doctrinal controversies were called) and to let down the bars that divided the churches from one another. Especially the confessions, it was held, must be removed, because, like toll-gates along a highway, they hindered progress, and, to sum up, a great universal union of the churches, at least of the Protestant churches, must at last be instituted.

But, lo! what happened? In the year 1817, when this plan was to be executed, *Claus Harms*, in whom there was still some Lutheran blood flowing, wrote ninety-five theses against Rationalism and the union of churches, which he intended as a counterpart to the Ninety-five Theses of Luther. In these theses he said to the advocates of church union: "You purpose to make the poor handmaid, the Lutheran Church, rich by a marriage. Do not perform the act over Luther's grave. Life will come into his bones, and then — woe to you!" This glorious prediction was fulfilled. When the union of churches was actually put into effect in Prussia, multitudes of Lutherans suddenly awoke from their spiritual sleep, remembered that they belonged to the Lutheran Church, and declared that they would never forsake the faith of their fathers. In fact, they chose to see themselves evicted from their homes, imprisoned, and expatriated rather than consent to a union of truth with error, of the Word of God with man's word, of the true Church with a false Church.

Those were glorious days in the dark period about the middle of the nineteenth century. It is a pity that from the glorious conflict of those trying times there did not emerge the old, pure, genuine Lutheran Church. The reason was that the very men who wished to "hold that fast which they had that no man take their crown," Rev. 3, 11, did not possess a clear and pure knowledge of the truth; and so it happened that they went from one extreme to the other: from Rationalism and religions and ecclesiastical indifferentism to particularism and a hierarchical tendency that was anti-Lutheran. The men, namely, who in those days led others in their determined opposition to the union of churches and strenuously insisted on being Lutherans, proceeded to prove their claim by asserting that the true visible Lutheran Church is the Church mentioned in the

Third Article of the Creed, in these words: "I believe a holy Christian Church, the communion of saints." They held that the Lutheran Church is the Church *par excellence* (κατ' ἐξοχήν), the Church in the most exalted and proper sense, the *ecclesia, extra quam nulla est salus,* the Church outside of which there is no salvation, possibly with this limitation: "except that God in a miraculous and extraordinary manner may save a person also outside of this Church and lead him to eternal life." It was a pathetic and fatal error, which placed these men in direct contradiction to the Holy Scriptures and, moreover, overthrew the cardinal doctrine of Christianity, the doctrine that a poor sinner is made righteous in the sight of God for Christ's sake, by faith alone. This error plainly involved a most detestable confusion and commingling of Law and Gospel. This error is still in vogue in the Separate Lutheran Church of Prussia.

Thesis XX.

In the sixteenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when a person's salvation is made to depend on his association with the visible orthodox Church and when salvation is denied to every person who errs in any article of faith.

It seems strange, indeed, that after such a long time during which Rationalism and the greatest religious indifference were prevalent, men should have hit upon the doctrine that the visible Lutheran Church is the Church κατ' ἐξοχήν, outside of which there is no salvation. However, although this seems to be incomprehensible on first blush, it is easily explained by the prolific nature of error. The mother of the awful error which we are studying is the doctrine that the Church is a visible institute which Christ has established on earth, differing in no way from a religious state. Its governing offices are, indeed, not in the hands of kings, emperors, generals, and burgomasters, but in their place there are superintendents, bishops, church councils, pastors, deacons, synods, and the like. That *this view* is *erroneous*, every one who is at least somewhat conversant with God's Word knows. Does not the Savior say: "Upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"? Matt. 16, 18. This rock is Christ. No one is a member of the Church except he who is built upon Christ. Being built upon Christ does not mean connecting oneself mechanically with the Church, but putting one's confidence in Christ and hoping to obtain righteousness and salvation from Him alone.

Whoever fails to do this is not built on this rock, hence is not a member of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Paul says to the Ephesians, chap. 2, 19—22: *Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* No one is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets who does not believingly cling to their word. Hence, no one is a member of the Church who is without a living faith.

The Savior calls Himself a Bridegroom. Let no one who is not betrothed to Christ with the innermost affection of his heart claim to be a true Christian and a member of the Church. As regards his relation to Christ, he is an alien; the Church, however, is the bride of Christ.

Again, Christ is called the Head of the Church. Hence only he can be a member of the Church into whom there flows from Christ, the Head, light, life, strength, and grace. Whoever is not in this spiritual connection with Christ has not Christ for his Head. Whoever is his own ruler and is not governed by Christ does not belong to the Church.

In another place the apostle calls the Church the body of Christ. This has prompted many even of the most faithful Lutherans to say that, since a body is visible, the Church, too, must be visible. But that is an abominable piece of exegesis. The point of comparison (*tertium comparationis*) in the aforementioned phrase is not the visibility of the Church, but that, instead of being composed of many dead instruments, it is a vital organism of members in whom *one* faith and one energy of faith is pulsating. This proves beyond contradiction that the Church is not visible, but invisible. Only he is a member of the Church who experiences the constant outflowing of energy from Christ, the Head of the Church.

Again, Christ calls the Church His flock. Hence no one is a member of the Church who does not belong to the flock of Christ, is not one of His sheep, pastured by Him and obeying His voice.

The objection is raised that Christ compares the Church to a field in which wheat and tares are growing. But the objection is owing to a wrong interpretation of the parable. Christ has given us the key that unlocks its meaning. He does not say: "The field is My kingdom." In that case the Church would be a society com-

posed of good and evil members. But He says: "The field is the world." Matt. 13, 38. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession emphasizes this fact. The Savior likens His Church to a field in which tares grow together with the wheat; to a net in which good and bad fishes are caught; to a marriage feast to which foolish virgins come with others, and to which, according to another parable, one gained entrance who is not dressed in the proper wedding-garment. By means of all these parables Christ does not mean to describe the essence of the Church, but the outward form in which it appears in this world and its lot among the men of this world: although it is composed only of good sheep, only of regenerate persons, still it never presents itself in the form of a congregation that is made up of none but true Christians. In its visible form the Church can never purge itself of hypocrites and ungodly persons, who find their way into it. Not until its consummation in the life eternal will the Church appear triumphant, entirely purified, and without blemish, separated from those who were not honestly and sincerely joined to it, but only sought their own secular interest in an outward union with the Church. While hypocrites and sham Christians profess Christ with their lips, their heart is far from Him. They are serving their carnal lusts and not the Lord alone. In Luke 14, 26 the Lord says: "If any man come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." In this passage, Christ passes judgment on all who do not want to renounce what they have. But not until all are gathered before the judgment-seat of Christ will these people become known as hypocrites. *We may see people going to church, but we cannot see whether they belong to the Church.* It is impossible to declare regarding individuals that they are true members of the Church. No man, but only God, knows whether they are. To the eyes of God alone the Church is visible; to the eyes of men it is invisible.

The error which we are now discussing is the primary falsehood (*πρῶτον ψεῦδος*) of our time. It is an awful error. For those who are addicted to this error pretend to be good Lutherans, opposed to the papists, and yet they have only changed weapons with the papists. Formerly the papists defended the false doctrine now under review; now Lutherans dare to set up the claim against them that the Lutherans, aye, the Lutherans, are the Church outside of which there is no salvation. Lutherans of this stripe become an object of ridicule to the papists. They take over the part formerly acted

by the Pope and his rabble. The only inferences that can be drawn from this state of affairs would be, either that the Pope's Church is the true Church or that the true Church had perished before Luther came. But Scripture says that the true Church cannot perish; it shall continue until the end of time. Now, until the sixteenth century there was no Church denominated "Lutheran." In fact, no Church since the days of the apostles has had the pure doctrine as our fathers had it. Hence, either Scripture has lied or the Roman Church was the true Church and Luther's reformation was rebellion. That is the vexing dilemma in which all those are placed who wish to maintain the false doctrine concerning the Church sketched above.

Its worst feature, however, is undeniably this: Making a person's salvation depend on this membership in, and communion with, the visible orthodox Church means to overthrow the doctrine of justification by faith. True faith has been obtained by people before they join the Lutheran Church. It is a fatal mistake to think that Luther before becoming a Lutheran — *sit venia verbo!* — did not have the true faith. Though we esteem our Church highly, may this abominable fanatical notion be far from us, that our Lutheran Church is the alone-saving Church! The true Church extends throughout the world and is found in all sects; for it is not an external organism with peculiar arrangements to which a person must adapt himself in order to become a member of the Church. Any one who believes in Jesus Christ and is a member of His spiritual body is a member of the Church. This Church, moreover, is never divided; although its members are separated from one another by space and time, the Church is ever one.

A false inference is drawn from the fact that Scripture speaks of external ecclesiastical communities, such as those at Rome, Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, in Galatia, and those in Asia Minor to whom the Lord issued letters through St. John. All these visible communities are called churches. Hence it is claimed that the Church is visible. — Now, Luther, in order to keep people from imagining that the Pope is the Church, has translated ἐκκλησία by "congregation," which is a correct rendering. The inference drawn from the use of this term when applied to local churches is wrong, because the Scriptures, as a rule, employ this term when referring to no local congregation, but to the Church in the absolute sense, and that is an invisible community. The term is applied to local organizations because the invisible Church is contained in

them. In a similar manner we speak of a stack of wheat, although it is not all wheat, but a good deal of hay and straw is in the pile. Or we speak of a glass of wine, although water has been mixed with it. In such instances the object is denominated *a potiore parte,* from its principal content. Thus visible communities are called "churches" because the invisible Church is in them, because they contain a heavenly seed. False Christians and hypocrites are given the name of "members of the congregation," when in reality they are not members. Since they confess the name of Jesus, we apply to them this title charitably, assuming that they believe what they confess. We cannot look into their hearts. We leave that to God. We do not judge them, except when they become manifest as ungodly persons. In that case we cease applying the title to them, but put them away from us and call them heathen men and publicans.

Now, the Lutheran Church, too, as a visible community, is called a "church" in a synecdochical sense. It is, therefore, an awful mistake to claim that men can be saved only in the Lutheran Church. No one must be induced to join the Lutheran Church because he thinks that only in that way he can get into the Church of God. There are still Christians in the Reformed Church, among the Methodists, yea, among the papists. We have this precious promise in Is. 55, 11: "My Word shall not return unto Me void." Wherever the Word of God is proclaimed and confessed or even recited during the service, the Lord is gathering a people for Himself. The Roman Church, for instance, still confesses that Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross to redeem the world. That is truth sufficient to bring a man to the knowledge of salvation. Whoever denies this fact is forced to deny also that there are Christians in some Lutheran communities in which errors have cropped out. But there are always some children of God in these communities because they have the Word of God, which is always bearing fruit in converting some souls to God.

The false doctrine concerning the Church which we are studying involves a fatal confounding of Law and Gospel. While the Gospel requires faith in Jesus Christ, the Law makes all sorts of demands upon men. Setting up a demand of some kind as necessary to salvation in addition to faith, the acceptance of the Gospel promises, means to commingle Law and Gospel. I belong to the Lutheran Church for the sole reason that I want to side with the truth. I quit the Church to which I belong when I find that it harbors errors with which I do not wish to be contaminated. I do

not wish to become a partaker of other men's sins, and by quitting a heretical community I confess the pure and unadulterated truth. For Christ says: "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." Matt. 10, 32. 33. Again, Paul writes distinctly to Timothy: "Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of *me,* his prisoner." 2 Tim. 1, 8.

From the fact that men may be saved in all the sects and that in all sectarian churches there are children of God, it by no means follows that one can remain in communion with a sect. Many people cannot comprehend this; they imagine it is an utterly unionistic principle to hold that a person can be saved in any of the sects. But it is true, and the reason is that we are saved by faith, which some members of sectarian churches may have. However, if I perceive the error of my heretical community and do not forsake it, I shall be lost because, though seeing the error, I would not abandon it. I can still remember the time when I became a believer. Then I also joined the unionists. Some persons approached me with the intention of bringing me into the Lutheran Church. But I told them that I was a believer and did not choose to belong to a Church that claimed to be the *alone*-saving Church. Afterwards I found some good writings, which showed me that the Lutheran Church claims to be the *only Church that has the pure doctrine,* but does not claim to be the alone-saving Church, and admits that men can be saved in the sects if they are not aware of their error. As soon as I learned this, I quit the unionistic community and joined the Lutherans. I had long known that the Lutheran Church has the truth, but I refused to endorse the aforementioned papistic principle. Then I understood that one does not have to condemn any one who is in error regarding some article of the Creed, but only those who have seen their error and still want to abide in it.

Let me show you that this is indeed the doctrine of our Church. In the *Preface to the Book of Concord* (Mueller, p. 16. 17; *Trigl. Conc.,* pp. 19. 21) we read: "As to the condemnations, censures, and rejections of godless doctrines, and especially of that which has arisen concerning the Lord's Supper, these indeed had to be expressly set forth in this our declaration and thorough explanation and decision of controverted articles, not only that all should guard against these condemned doctrines, but also for certain other reasons they could in no way have been passed by. Thus, as it is in no way our design and purpose to condemn *those men who err*

from a certain simplicity of mind, but are not blasphemers against the truth of the heavenly doctrine, much less, indeed, entire churches, which are either under the Roman Empire of the German Nation or elsewhere; nay, rather has it been our intention and disposition in this manner *openly to censure and condemn* only the fanatical opinions and their obstinate and blasphemous teachers (which, we judge, should in no way be tolerated in our dominions, churches, and schools), because these errors conflict with the express Word of God, and that, too, in such a way that they cannot be reconciled with it. We have undertaken this also for this reason, *viz.,* that all godly persons might be warned diligently to avoid them. For we have no doubt whatever *that even in those churches which have hitherto not agreed with us in all things many godly and by no means wicked men are found who follow their own simplicity, and do not understand aright the matter itself, but in no way approve of the blasphemies* which are cast forth against the Holy Supper as it is administered in our churches, according to Christ's institution, and, with the unanimous approval of all good men, is taught in accordance with the words of the testament itself. We are also in great hope that, if they would be taught aright concerning all these things, the Spirit of the Lord aiding them, they would agree with us, and with our churches and schools, to the infallible truth of God's Word. And assuredly, the duty is especially incumbent upon all the theologians and ministers of the Church, that with such moderation as is becoming they teach from the Word of God also those who either from a certain simplicity or ignorance have erred from the truth, concerning the danger to their salvation, and that they fortify them against corruptions, lest perhaps, while the blind are leaders of the blind, all might perish."

You may cite this fine passage if you meet with such as reproachingly say that the Lutheran Church claims to be the alone-saving Church. True, the Formula of Concord has condemned the *doctrine* of the Reformed, but this condemnation does not apply to those who err in the simplicity of their hearts, but only to obstinate false teachers and blasphemers. People who admit that Christ has said this or that, but refuse to believe, people who begin to *utter shocking blasphemies against the true doctrine, are not to be regarded as children of God.* Yet there are others who have been reared from a child in a certain error, but are holding fast their Savior; these are not wicked persons, though they may promptly turn away a Lutheran who approaches them.

The preface continues: "Wherefore, by this writing of ours we testify in the sight of Almighty God and the entire Church that it has never been our purpose, by means of this godly formula for union to create trouble or danger to the godly who to-day are suffering persecution. For, as we have already entered into the fellowship of grief with them, moved by Christian love, so we are shocked at the persecution and most grievous tyranny which is exercised with such severity against these poor men, and sincerely detest it. For in no way do we consent to the shedding of that innocent blood, which undoubtedly will be required with great severity from the persecutors at the awful Judgment of the Lord and before the tribunal of Christ, and they will then certainly have to render a very strict account and suffer fearful punishment."

The Lutheran confessors here refer to a rumor that was being spread by the Calvinists that the Lutherans in Germany would imitate the Romanists in France and institute a St. Bartholomew's night of their own. The Lutherans asseverate in this passage that they are not planning to persecute anybody. The blood of the Huguenots will be only on papists' hands. In general, the Lutherans condemn none but those who condemn themselves by resisting the known truth.

From the preface which *Luther* wrote to the theses against indulgences which he had published previously we can see what a grievous task it was for him to forge his way to the true knowledge. He writes (St. L. Ed. XIV, 452 f.): "Of the manifold sufferings and trials through which I passed that first year and the year following, of the great humiliation that I had to undergo, — and that was genuine and not feigned, for it reached the degree of despair, — of all these things little is known to these self-confident spirits who, after me, have attacked the majesty of the Pope with great bluster and audacity. Still, with all their skill they would not have been able to harm a hair on the Pope's head if Christ had not previously inflicted a deep, irremediable wound on him through me, his puny and unworthy instrument. Nevertheless, they carry off the glory and the honor as if they had done it, — to which honor they are welcome for all I care. But while they were looking on at my loneliness and jeopardy, I was not very cheerful, confident, and certain of my affair. For many things which I know now — God be praised! — I did not know at that time. Verily, I did not understand, nor did all the papists together understand, the character of an indulgence; it was revered merely on account of long-established usage and custom. My object in inviting men to a

disputation concerning it was not to reject it, but really to find out its virtue from others, since I knew absolutely nothing about it myself. Since the dead and dumb masters — I mean, the books of theologians and jurists — could not give me sufficient information, I desired to seek counsel from the living and *to hear the Church of God itself*, asking such godly persons as might be enlightened by the Holy Spirit regarding this matter to take pity on me — and not only on me, but on the entire Christian Church — and give us a true and reliable account of indulgences. Many godly men were greatly pleased with my theses and thought highly of them. But I found it impossible to regard and acknowledge them as members of the Church, endowed with the Holy Spirit. *I only regarded the Pope, the cardinals, bishops, theologians, jurists, monks, and priests and was waiting for the Spirit from them.* So eagerly had I taken in their doctrine, or, I might say, devoured it and guzzled it, that I had been filled to bursting with it and was not sure whether I was awake or sleeping."

To this day the papists seek to keep the people with their Church by telling them: "You know that we are the true Church. No matter what the Church teaches, if you want to be a true disciple of Christ, you must hear the Church. If the Pope decrees that he is infallible, or that Mary was conceived without sin, or that the saints must be adored, you must accept these dogmas. You may not consult your reason. The true Church has set up these dogmas, and it cannot err. If you fall away from the Roman Catholic Church, you fall away from the true Church." This is the bait with which they hook the people.

Luther continues: "When I had disproved all the arguments against me with Scripture and thus overcome them, I scarcely succeeded, by the grace of Christ, in overcoming, with great anxiety, trouble, and labor, this one final argument, that I must hear the Church. For with all my heart I was much more in earnest and much more reverent in regarding the Pope's Church as the true Church than these abominable and blasphemous perverters, who are now opposing me boastfully with the Pope's Church. If I had despised the Pope as those despise him nowadays who are praising him highly with their lips, I should have been afraid to see the earth open and devour me as it did Korah and his mob."

Luther had already discovered the untenableness of nearly every papistic teaching, except this one point, which, he says, troubled him greatly at the beginning and kept him from becoming really assured of the truth and being cheerful. The papists themselves cooked

the soup which they had to eat later. God's hour had come for revealing the Antichrist.

May God keep you from becoming entangled with this false teaching concerning the Church, *viz.*, that the Lutheran Church is the true visible Church of Jesus Christ *in the sense that one can be saved only in this Church!* The Lutheran Church is indeed the true visible Church; however, only in this sense, that it has the pure, unadulterated truth. As soon as you add the qualification "alone-saving" to the Lutheran Church, you detract from the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and confound Law and Gospel. May God keep you from this error for the sake of your own soul and those that will be entrusted to your care!

THIRTY-THIRD EVENING LECTURE.

(September 4, 1885.)

It goes without saying, my friends, that the first and the indispensable requisite of a theologian is a complete, accurate, and clear knowledge of every single doctrine of the divine revelation. It is a self-contradiction to call any person a theologian who does not possess this knowledge. Theologians, you know, are to be curates of men's souls. A physician must know, above all, the remedies which nature furnishes for the healing of bodily ills. In like manner the physician of souls, that is, the theologian, must have a good knowledge of the spiritual remedies which the Word of God furnishes for the ills of the soul. These spiritual remedies, however, are nothing else than the doctrines which God has revealed for our salvation.

However, while an accurate, complete, and clear knowledge of every single doctrine of God's revelation to man is indispensably necessary to a theologian, this does not by any means represent his entire need. There are chiefly two additional requisites which are no less needed by him; namely, *in the first place,* a good knowledge of the mutual relations of doctrines to one another, which will enable him to make the proper application of each; *in the second place,* courage, love, and liking for his theological calling. A physician may know all sorts of medicaments which possess the natural virtue of healing, but by ignorantly mixing them in a wrong way he may neutralize their virtue and, instead of curing the physical ailment of his patient, hasten on his death. In like manner a

theologian who does not know which doctrines he may combine and which doctrines he must carefully keep separate may easily harm more than help a soul. Lastly, a physician will properly discharge his onerous duties only when he is actuated by love and a liking for his special work and is unconcerned about the filthy lucre which he may gain for his work. Even so a theologian will be faithful in his calling only when he is filled with enthusiasm for it and finds his chief reward in the help which God affords him for the saving of souls, in the destruction of the kingdom of Satan, in the building up of the kingdom of God, and in the increasing number of those who are peopling heaven.

I have ever considered it my sacred duty, not only to present the pure doctrine in my dogmatic lectures according to the grace which God has given me, but I also deemed it necessary to find an hour at least once a week when I might gather the entire student-body of our beloved Concordia about me and show them the importance, the meaning, and the practical applications of the doctrines that are studied in dogmatics and, above all, cheer their hearts for their difficult calling. We call these Friday evening lectures, which form, as it were, the conclusion of the week's instruction, "Luther Hours," chiefly because in these lectures I let our beloved father Luther, the God-appointed Reformer and the common teacher of our Church, speak to you. God has hitherto graciously blessed these lectures; for my beloved students have gladly attended these evening lectures, and many of them have solemnly assured me that they have been benefited by them, that they have not only gained a clearer knowledge of the Christian doctrine, but have also been made more certain of the forgiveness of their sins, of their adoption, by God, as His dear children, and of their future blessedness. I cherish the hope that God will help also the students who just entered our Concordia and whom we welcome to-night to have the same beneficial experiences. I shall pray God to grant me grace to speak to you as I should and that what I say will be well received by you. Bear in mind, however, that, if my prayer is to be heard, you will have to add your prayer to mine for a blessed experience of the truth. For you are not here for the purpose of acquiring knowledge of secular sciences, but for the purpose of being taught how to become familiar with a doctrine which, in the first place, will save you and then save many others through your ministry. This requires very earnest application. You will have to put off the shoes of your earthly, carnal mind and, with Mary, sit down at

Jesus' feet, to hear from Him what is the one thing needful. God grant this and make me be a helper to you for all time!

On the basis of twenty-five theses we started last year to discuss the distinction between the Law and the Gospel. Five theses still remain to be discussed, and these are by no means unimportant. We must finish these before we take up another subject. I hope that our new entrants, although they will hear only a fragment of the present subject discussed, will nevertheless get some food for their spirit out of these lectures, some strengthening of their faith, and some inducement to withdraw from the world and leave the service of sin, and something that will attract them to Jesus. For if we who are here assembled are not true Christians, we are utter reprobates, on whom God cannot but look down in anger. For can there be a drearier prospect than not being a Christian and yet drawing pay for the time which one serves as pastor of a congregation? I hope that you are all true Christians, that the blessed Word of God has drawn you and by its divine power has made a deep and lasting impression on you, and that some day when you leave this institution, you will go forth equipped not only with a fine stock of theological knowledge, but also with a heart burning with zeal to proclaim the great things which the Lord has done for mankind.

I hope that the students of last year will not consider it tedious if I read all the theses which have already been discussed in order that our new friends may know what the discussion has been about and how important the remaining theses are.

(The first twenty theses were read and briefly commented on.)

True faith, which does not grow spontaneously out of any person, is so firm that, though the heavens were to cave in and hell were to open its maw, its possessor could defy them by his believing appeal to Jesus Christ, true God, who has redeemed him, a lost and condemned creature, with His precious blood, and secured him against the ravages of all the devils of hell. The faith of hypocrites, however, is like the snow of March, which melts in the sun.

Some imagine they are quite strict Lutherans when they assert that no one can be saved who is not a Lutheran or who does not profess the Lutheran doctrine at least on his death-bed. But this claim stamps them, not as genuine Lutherans, but as apostates from Lutheranism. The Lutheran Church does not set up such a claim, but it does indeed instruct men how to be justified and saved by grace. There are persons living among the sects that love the truth and may be better Christians than some Lutherans. Christ rules everywhere, even among His enemies.

Thesis XXI.

In the seventeenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when men are taught that the Sacraments produce salutary effects ex opere operato, that is, by the mere outward performance of a sacramental act.

The grave error which is scored by this thesis is held by the papists, who teach men that they will derive some benefit by merely submitting to the act of being baptized, despite the fact that they are still unbelievers, provided they are not actually living in mortal sins. That mere act is said to bring them God's favor or make God gracious to them. They teach the same regarding the Mass and the Lord's Supper, *viz.*, that grace is obtained by the mere act of attending these rites. This impious and abominable teaching contradicts pointblank the Word of God, in particular, the Gospel, which teaches that a person is justified before God and saved by grace alone, and that he cannot perform any good work until he has been thus justified.

Rom. 3, 28 Paul writes: *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law.* If I am justified, if I obtain grace by my act of submitting to baptizing or by my act of going to Communion, I am justified by works, and that, altogether paltry works, scarcely worth mentioning. For that is what Baptism and Holy Communion are when viewed as works that we perform. It is a horrible doctrine, wholly contradicting the Bible, that divine grace is obtained if a person at least makes external use of the Sacraments. The truth is that Baptism and Holy Communion place any person under condemnation who does not approach them with faith in his heart. They are means of grace only for the reason that a divine promise has been attached to an external symbol. Having water poured on me is of no benefit to me. Nor am I benefited by actually receiving the body and blood of the Lord in the Holy Supper. Yea, I am rather harmed by going to Communion without faith, because I become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. It is of paramount importance that I believe, that I regard, not the water in Baptism, but the promise which Christ has attached to the water. It is this promise that requires the water; for only to it has the promise been attached. The same applies to the Holy Supper: it is impious to imagine that the act of approaching the Lord's Table, doing something that the Lord wants done, is one more merit that He will have to credit to our

account. The Lord says: "Take, eat; this is My body, *which is given for you.*" "Drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in My blood, *which is shed for the remission of sins.*" These words open up a heaven full of divine grace to the communicant, and to these words he must direct his faith. The mere act of eating the bread with the body of Christ and of drinking the wine with the blood of Christ produces no good effect in us. Grace does not operate in a chemical or in a mechanical manner, but only by the Word, by virtue of God's saying continually: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." To this word I must cling by faith. If I do that, I can confidently meet God on the Last Day; and if He were preparing to condemn me, I could say to Him: "Thou canst not condemn me without making Thyself a liar. Thou hast invited me to place my entire confidence in Thy promise. I have done that, and therefore I cannot be condemned, and I know Thou wilt not do it." If God were to try the faith of His Christians even on the Last Day, all His saints would cry: "It is impossible that we should be consigned to perdition. Here is Christ, our Surety and Mediator. Thou wilt have to acknowledge, O God, the ransom which Thy Son has given as payment in full for our sin and guilt."

Rom. 14, 23 we read: *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.* How, then, can a person who uses the Sacraments without faith become acceptable to God by that act or obtain God's grace by it, since he is committing a sin by doing something that does not proceed from faith?

In this connection the statement, too, deserves to be pondered that is recorded concerning the working of God's Word on the inner powers of man, Heb. 4, 12: *For the Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

False teachers admit that preaching, unless it is received by faith, does not benefit the hearers, but rather increases their responsibility. However, they claim, the situation is different as regards the Sacraments, since these have, they say, this great advantage over the preached Word, that God operates with His grace through them whenever men merely use them. That is an impious doctrine, because the Sacraments are nothing else than the Word of God attached to a symbol. Augustine beautifully calls them *verbum visibile*, the visible Word. The Word of God does not benefit a person who does not believe. Even so an unbeliever is not benefited by going through the action of being baptized. When

we urge men to believe in their Baptism, the meaning is that they are to believe their heavenly Father, who has attached such a glorious promise to Baptism. The idea that God is highly pleased when a person offers his head to have water sprinkled on it is an abominable misuse of the *verbum visibile*. As the Word does not benefit a person who does not believe, even so the Sacraments help only those who embrace them by faith.

Therefore the charge of fanatics that Lutherans do not urge conversion is baseless. The charge rests on the assumption that Lutherans teach men to rely on the fact that they have been baptized and received Holy Communion. But that is not at all what we teach. This is our doctrine: There is a certain promise of God attached to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which is to be embraced without doubting. That can be done only by men who have become poor sinners. To say to a person: "You must take comfort in your Baptism" and: "You must turn to Jesus Christ" is identical. A person may imagine that he is a believer, but a brief affliction will suffice to dissipate that notion. Only the Holy Spirit can give a person true faith.

THIRTY-FOURTH EVENING LECTURE.

(September 11, 1885.)

Nowadays any one who insists that pure doctrine is a very important matter is at once suspected of not having the right Christian spirit. The very term "pure doctrine" has been proscribed and outlawed. Even such modern theologians as wish to be numbered with the confessionalists, as a rule, speak of pure doctrine only in derisive terms, treating it as the shibboleth of dead-letter theology. If any one goes to the extreme, as it is held to be, of even fighting for the pure doctrine and opposing every false doctrine, he is set down as a heartless and unloving fanatic. What may be the reason? Unquestionably this, that modern theologians know full well that they have not that doctrine which in all ages has been called, and verily is, the pure doctrine. Furthermore, they even think that pure doctrine does not exist (is a *non-ens*), except in a dream-world, in the realm of ideals, in the Republic of Plato.

The time in which we live is that to which the apostle refers when he says of errorists that they are "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." 2 Tim. 3, 7. The spirit of our time is that of Pilate, to whom the Lord had testified that

He was a King of Truth in a kingdom of truth, and who sneeringly replied, "What is truth?" John 18, 38. This unhappy man was most likely thinking in his heart that, since the greatest minds for thousands of years had vainly tried to find the answer to the question, What is truth? this poor beggar, this contemptible Nazarene, Christ, made Himself simply ridiculous with His claim that He was the King of Truth and would establish a kingdom of incontrovertible and eternal truth.

Contempt of the pure doctrine is contempt of the truth; for the pure doctrine is simply nothing else, absolutely nothing else, than the pure Word of God. It is not, as some think, the doctrine adapted to the systems of dogmaticians that has been accepted by the Church. Accordingly, contempt of the pure doctrine is proof that we are living in an unspeakably lamentable era. For listen in what terms the Scriptures themselves speak of God's Word and the pure doctrine. In the prophecies of Jeremiah we read, chap. 23, 28: "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." David addresses God Himself in these words of Ps. 94, 20: "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" By the term "law" he refers, in general, to the Word of God. What says our dear Lord Christ Himself regarding this matter? In John 8, 31. 32 He says: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Over against this, German theologians are not ashamed to say: "Bah! We are seeking after truth, but only a conceited, self-satisfied person will claim to have achieved it." Such talk shows to what depths we have sunk. Does not the Lord say distinctly: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"? Jude, the faithful apostle, writes in his epistle, v. 3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you that ye should *earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*" The apostle is referring, not to faith in a person's heart, but to faith objectively viewed, that is, to the pure doctrine. John, the beloved disciple, the spokesman of love, writes, 2 Ep. 9—11: "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil

deeds." The holy Apostle Paul writes to Titus concerning the qualities of a Christian pastor, chap. 1, 9—11: "Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouth must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." In his First Epistle to Timothy, chap. 4, 16, he writes: "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them." Lastly, he writes to the Galatian congregation, after errorists had found their way into them, in chap. 5, 7—9: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." He means to say that a single false teaching vitiates the entire body of the Christian doctrine, even as a little poison dropped into pure water produces a deadly potion.

Let us picture to ourselves as vividly as we can the situation that would have been created in the early Church, when errorists like Arius, Nestorius, and Pelagius arose, if men like Athanasius, Cyril, and Augustine had not earnestly opposed them. As far back as in the fourth and fifth centuries the Church would have lost the primary article of the Christian faith; the foundation would have been removed from beneath it, and it would have had to collapse. That was, indeed, impossible in view of the eternal counsel of God concerning the Church; however, because of that very counsel, God had to raise up instruments such as those teachers were. True, while they lived, they were hated and persecuted as malicious disturbers of Christendom, but for more than a thousand years their names have been beacon-lights, as names of great witnesses to the saving truth, and in eternity they will shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever. Dan. 12, 3. Let no one, then, be deterred from giving his testimony in behalf of the truth by the charge that he has a false spirit. That charge emanates only from unbelief.

Again, suppose Luther, after learning the truth, had indeed borne testimony for it to his immediate associates, but had not entered into conflict with the Papacy because of the great abominations which it had introduced into the Church, what would have happened? Christianity would have to remain under the soul-tyranny of the Roman Antichrist, and we all should still be subjects of it.

There is no question, then, but that both, yes, both these efforts are necessary: to defend the truth and to oppose every doctrinal error. To qualify you for both tasks is one of the aims of these Friday evening lectures. May God bestow His blessing on the discussion of the subject that is before us to-night! —

At our last meeting we barely began to discuss the important contents of the twenty-first thesis, *viz.*, that Law and Gospel are not properly divided, the one from the other, when it is claimed that by the mere performance of the act of being baptized and going to Communion, salvation can be obtained. This is a most abominable way of confounding Law and Gospel.

The Gospel merely says: "Believe, and thou shalt be saved," while the Law issues the order: "Do this, and thou shalt live." Now, if the mere act of being baptized and partaking of Holy Communion brings grace to a person, the Gospel manifestly has been turned into a law, because salvation then rests on a person's works. Moreover, the Law has been turned into a gospel, because salvation is promised a person as a reward for his works.

One would indeed think it to be utterly impossible for a Christian minister to teach that the Sacraments produce salutary effects *ex opere operato;* still, that is what happens again and again. This awful error is taught by the very men who wish to pass for genuinely strict Lutherans, every time they discuss the Sacraments. When they have finished unfolding their doctrine of Baptism, every hearer has received the unmistakable impression that, in order to get to heaven, it is merely necessary to submit to the act of being baptized. When they have finished their presentation of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, the people are convinced that, to obtain the forgiveness of sins, all that a person has to do is to mount the altar steps and take Communion, because God has attached His grace to this external action.

A week ago I began to show you that this teaching is diametrically opposed to the doctrine of the Gospel. This is proved by all passages which testify that the Gospel requires nothing but faith and makes faith the one essential. That being the case, no one dare say that this or that work will benefit a person. If the Word that is preached will not benefit a person unless he believes it, neither will being baptized and taking Communion benefit any one without faith. Telling a person that he shall be saved by faith means nothing else than that he shall be saved by grace. Most people express the matter thus: "If you wish to be saved, you must

perform this task and that, but you must not omit to *believe*. That is what God requires of you." Over against this notion remember the precious text in Rom. 4, 16: "Therefore it [righteousness] is *of faith* that it might be *by grace*." Any teaching that is set up contrary to the doctrine that man is not saved by his works, his running, or any effort of his own, but by grace alone, is an error that subverts the foundation of the Christian doctrine. "You must believe" means: "You must accept what is offered you." Our Father in heaven offers men forgiveness of sins, righteousness, life, and salvation. But of what benefit is a present that is not accepted? Accepting a present is not a work by which I earn the present, but it signifies laying hold of what is being offered. When I extend my hand, with a gift in it, to a beggar, I am not certain whether he is going to accept the gift, though I am in full earnest in offering it to him. If he lets my gift fall to the ground, he naturally gets nothing.

Let me offer you a few passages that treat, in particular, of the Sacraments. Mark 16, 16 the Lord says: "*He that* BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED *shall be saved*." He does not say: "He that is baptized and believeth," but the reverse. Faith is the primary necessity; Baptism is something to which faith holds. Moreover, the Lord continues: "*But he that believeth not shall be damned*." This shows that even if a person could not have Baptism administered to himself, he would be saved, as long as he believed.

Acts 8, 36. 37 we read: "*And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said,* IF THOU BELIEVEST WITH ALL THINE HEART, THOU MAYEST. *And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*." The only thing that Philip required was faith, as if he had said to the eunuch: "If you do not believe, being baptized will not benefit you at all." At our baptism it is not we that are performing a work, but God.

Gal. 3, 26. 27 Paul writes: *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*. This text shows that Christ is put on in Baptism only if a person believes. The current interpretation is that any one that is baptized has put on Christ; however, that is not what the apostle says, but: "As many *of you*," namely, of you who are "the children of God by faith." Such people, indeed, put on Christ in Baptism. An unbeliever who receives Baptism does

not put on Christ, but keeps on the spotted garment of his sinful flesh.

At the institution of the Holy Supper the Lord says: "Take, eat; this is My body, *which* is given *for you.* Do this in remembrance of Me. Take and drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins." The Lord does not merely say: "This is My body," but He adds: "which is given for you"; He does not merely say: "This is My blood," but He adds: "Which is shed for you, for the remission of sins." It is plain that He means to say: "The point of chief importance is that you believe that this body was given *for you* and that this blood was shed for the remission of *your* sins. That is what you must believe if you wish to derive the real blessing from this heavenly feast." By the additional remarks: "Do this in remembrance of Me," Christ means to say: "Do it in faith." Surely, He does not mean to say: "Think of Me when you partake of My body and blood. Do not forget Me altogether!" Whoever thinks that Christ merely admonished His disciples not to consign Him to oblivion does not know the Savior. The true remembrance of Christ consists in the *believing* reflection of the communicant: "This body was given for *me;* this blood was shed for the remission of *my* sins. That gives me confidence to approach the altar. To this truth I shall cling by faith and esteem my Savior's pledge very highly." For when God adds a visible pledge to His Word, who is there that dares to doubt that His Word is truth and His promise will certainly be fulfilled? Remember this for the good of your own soul and conscience. As often as you go to Communion, have these words shine before your eyes: "Given for you"; "Shed for you for the remission of sins." If you fail to do this; if you imagine that by going to Communion you have once more done your duty and that God will regard your performance, your going to Communion is a damnable act, that will land you in eternal perdition. To go to Communion and eat the body of Christ and drink His blood with such a mind is an impudent action; but it is no impudence to hold fast to the word of His promise.

Rom. 4, 11 we read: *He* [Abraham] *received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.* Here we are told that Abraham believed before he was circumcised. Circumcision was intended to be merely a seal to him of the righteousness which he had by faith. It is an act of great kindness on the part of God, knowing how slow we

are to believe even after we have become believers, to add external signs to His Word and to attach His promise to them; for the Sacraments are connected with, and comprehended in, God's Word. The lustrous star that shines from out of the Sacraments is the Word.

Our Church is frequently charged with teaching that Baptism procures for us *ex opere operato* adoption as children of God and the Lord's Supper *ex opere operato* the forgiveness of sins. False teachers din this falsehood into people's ears, giving it out for Lutheran doctrine. If that were our doctrine, we should indeed not feel surprised if all true Christians were to shun us. It would be awful if we were to say first: "Man is not saved by works," and next: "However, by these two paltry works men are to obtain forgiveness of sins." True, many Lutherans determine by the almanac whether it is time for them to go to Communion again, because they imagine that going to Communion is a *work* which a Christian must perform and which he cannot afford to neglect. Thus they approach the altar and eat and drink death and damnation to themselves. What is to urge a person to go to Communion is the promise of grace which God has attached to the visible signs in the Sacrament. If a person approaches the altar with faith in that promise, he will leave the Table of the Lord with a blessing in his heart. It is a pity that many think and say: "I have been brought up to consider it my duty to go to Communion. If I perform this duty, then I am sure of my salvation."

True, the Lutheran Church speaks of the Sacraments in terms of such high esteem that fanatics become disgusted with it. The Lutheran Church holds to the word of the Lord: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." That is the reason why it condemns all false teachers which say that Baptism is merely a ceremony by which a person is received into the Church. According to Lutheran teaching, Baptism "works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe, as the words and promises of God declare." The Lutheran Church maintains that Baptism is "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost"; that the water in Baptism, as Peter says, "saves us"; and that those "who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." As regards the Lord's Supper, the Lutheran Church, resisting all attempts to mislead her into doubt, maintains the truth of the Lord's words when He says: "This is My body, which is given for you"; "This is My blood, which is

shed for you." The Lutheran Church regards the holy Sacraments as the most sacred, gracious, and precious treasure on earth and is firmly convinced that God is not a miserable master of ceremonies, who decrees what rites we are to observe when receiving a person into our communion. Christianity is not a Masonic society. When God commands a sacramental act, He commands something upon which our salvation depends.

However, at no time has the Lutheran Church asserted that men are saved by the mere external use of the Sacraments. That is a teaching against which it has always raised its voice, which it has always combated and condemned.

At this point modern theologians again reveal their papistic attitude, which is a strange thing to do for men who are more inclined to Rationalism. They declare that Baptism *is* regeneration, and from this false statement many form their wrong opinion of what the Lutheran Church teaches. Baptism, according to Lutheran teaching, *is not* regeneration, but *effects* it, *produces* it; it is a *means* of regeneration.

However, in order to make you see quite plainly that the Lutheran Church has nothing to do with the teaching of *ex-opere-operato* effects of the Sacraments, let me present a few testimonies from its Confessions.

In the *Small Catechism* of Luther we read (Mueller, p. 362; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 551): "How can water do such great things? Answer: It is not the water indeed that does them, but the word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such word of God in the water." When Peter says, 1 Ep. 3, 21, that "the like figure whereunto," namely, the water in Baptism typified by the water of the Flood, "also now saves us," he speaks by way of synecdoche. It is to the sacramental act of Holy Baptism that God has attached a great and glorious promise of grace.

Again, we read in the Sixth Chief Part of the Catechism (Mueller, p. 365; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 557): "How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things? Answer: It is not the eating and drinking indeed that does them, but the words which stand here, namely: 'Given and shed for you for the remission of sins.' Which words are, besides the bodily eating and drinking, *as the chief thing* in the Sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins." Modern theologians, as a rule, interpret the phrase "the chief thing in the Sacrament" to refer to the word of God which is recited in

connection with the Sacrament and which they term, in dogmatic phraseology, *forma sacrae coenae* (that which gives the Lord's Supper its proper form). That is not at all what the Catechism means; it treats, in this place, of the *effect* of the Sacrament and declares that the chief thing, as regards the effect, is this, that "the words stand there: 'Given for you,' 'Shed for you.'"

In the *Augsburg Confession,* Art. XIII (Mueller, p. 41, *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 49) we read: "Of the use of the Sacraments they teach that the Sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us, instituted *to awaken and confirm faith* in those who use them. *Wherefore we must so use the Sacraments that faith be added to believe the promises which are offered* and set forth through the Sacraments." Our faith is to be awakened and confirmed by the Sacraments. The mere preaching of the Word is to strengthen the Christian's faith. But when he is told that, in addition to the Word, God has instituted a special sacred act to which His promise has been attached, he must feel as if he were before the very gate of heaven. God wants to save us by His free grace. It is folly, therefore, to reason thus: "What? Am I to be saved by Baptism, by offering my head to have water poured on it? Is that to save me?" Indeed not; man is not to do anything to save himself. We are not to wonder that God prescribes for us something of which even man's reason must tell him: That cannot possibly be the thing by which I am to merit salvation. Fanatics, however, persuaded the people that such is our doctrine and that it is a remnant of papistic teaching that has not been sloughed off by the Lutheran Church. The mere mechanical action of being baptized, if it is not accompanied by faith, will earn for man nothing but perdition. The truth of the matter is this: God is so kind that He not only has His mercy preached to men, but, in addition, tells them to come to the Sacrament, by which He seals to them the promise of grace, which they are only to believe. Likewise, a person who imagines that he obtains forgiveness of sins by the mere act of eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper is under a delusion. The body of Christ does not produce effects in a physical manner, as Modernists claim when they say that it implants in man the seed of immortality. That idea is nothing but a dream of speculative theology, of which not a word is said in Scripture.

Lastly, we have in our Confessions a plain condemnation of the teaching that the Sacraments produce *ex-opere-operato* effects.

In the *Apology* of the Augsburg Confession, Art. XII (Mueller, p. 202 ff.; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 309 ff.) we read: "If we call Sacraments, rites which have the command of God and to which the promise of grace has been added, it is easy to decide what are properly Sacraments. For rites instituted by men will not in this way be Sacraments properly so called. For it does not belong to human authority to promise grace. Therefore signs instituted without God's command are not sure signs of grace, even though perhaps they instruct the rude children, or the uncultivated or admonish as to something, like a painted cross. Therefore Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Absolution, which is the Sacrament of Repentance, are truly Sacraments. For these rites have God's command and the promise of grace, which is peculiar to the New Testament. For when we are baptized, when we eat the Lord's body, when we are absolved, our hearts must be firmly assured that God truly forgives us for Christ's sake. And God, at the same time, by the Word and the rite, moves hearts to believe and conceive faith, just as Paul says, Rom. 10, 17: 'Faith cometh by hearing.' But just as the Word enters the ear to strike our heart, so the rite itself strikes the eye in order to move the heart. The effect of the Word and the rite is the same, as it has been well said by Augustine that a Sacrament is a visible word, because the rite is received by the eyes, and is, as it were, a picture of the Word, signifying the same thing as the Word. Therefore the effect of both is the same."

Anything offered us under the name of a Sacrament, to which, however, a promise of grace has not been added, is not accepted by us as a Sacrament. Moreover, just as Scripture does not teach (as the simplest Christian knows) that the mere outward act of hearing the Word saves any one, just as little does it teach that the Sacraments save thus. The mere symbol, placed before men's eyes, does not produce the salutary effect, but indicates what the Word proclaims. We baptize with water, which signifies that Baptism effects cleansing from sin, sanctification, regeneration, and renewal. What I am being told by means of preaching I behold in the external element of Baptism. The Word and the Sacrament produce the same effect in the heart.

Modernists picture the situation somewhat like this: For various ills God has ordained various remedies. They regard the Word, indeed, as a remedy, but they imagine that Baptism must be for a different purpose, namely, for the purpose of regenerating us. Again, the Lord's Supper must be for still another purpose,

namely, of uniting us with the body of Christ. Now, all these are human imaginings, about which Scripture does not say a word. The Word produces faith, brings us forgiveness of sins, and gives us the grace of God and salvation. Baptism does the same; so does the Lord's Supper. Now, a seal is of no benefit by itself. If I were to give you ten sheets with my seal affixed to them, you could not do business with them. When the apostle calls circumcision a seal, in indicates that all Sacraments are seals. God puts His Word in writing, on paper, and by means of the Sacrament seals what is contained in His gracious promises. For this reason the Lord does not merely command us to baptize, but He says: "He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved." In the pulpit the Word is audible, in the Sacraments it is visible.

Further on the *Apology* says: "It is still more needful to understand *how the Sacraments are to be used*. Here we *condemn* the whole crowd of scholastic doctors, who teach that the Sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato*, without a good disposition on the part of the one using them, provided we do not place a hindrance in the way. This is absolutely a Jewish opinion, to hold that we are justified by a ceremony, without a good disposition of the heart, *i. e.*, without faith. And yet this impious and pernicious opinion is taught with great authority throughout the entire realm of the Pope. Paul contradicts this and denies, Rom. 4, 9, that Abraham was justified by circumcision, but asserts that circumcision was a sign presented for exercising faith. Thus we teach that *in the use of the Sacraments faith ought to be added*, which should believe these promises and receive the promised things there offered in the Sacrament. And the reason is plain and thoroughly grounded. [This is a certain and true use of the holy Sacrament, on which Christian hearts and consciences may risk their confidence.] The promise is useless unless it is received by faith. But the Sacraments are the signs and seals of the promises. Therefore, in the use of the Sacraments faith ought to be added, so that, if any one use the Lord's Supper, he use it thus. Because this is a Sacrament of the New Testament, as Christ clearly says, he ought for this very reason be confident that what is promised in the New Testament, namely, the free remission of sins, is offered him. And let him receive this by faith; let him comfort his alarmed conscience and know that these testimonies are not fallacious, but as sure as though, and still surer than if, God by a new miracle would declare from heaven that it was His will to grant forgiveness. But of what advantage would

these miracles and promises be to an unbeliever? And here we speak of *special faith,* which believes the present promise, not only that which in general believes that God exists, but which believes that the remission of sins is offered. This use of the Sacrament consoles godly and alarmed minds.

"Moreover, no one can express in words what abuses in the Church *this fanatical opinion concerning the opus operatum, without a good disposition on the part of the one using the Sacraments,* has produced. Hence the infinite profanation of the Masses; but of this we shall speak below. Neither can a single letter be produced from the old writers which in this matter favors the Scholastics. Yea, Augustine says the contrary, that faith in the Sacrament, and not the Sacrament, justifies."

When the attention of would-be strict Lutherans is called to the foregoing statement, they regard it as Calvinistic. They claim that Baptism *is* regeneration and that the Lord's Supper produces mysterious, but altogether gracious effects in us. Of course, those who know this declaration of the Apology do not say, but they think, that it is Calvinistic. *Kahnis* knew the doctrine of the Lutheran Church well enough. When I was on a visit to Germany, he made me a present of his book *The Doctrine of the Lord's Supper.* In this book he says: "Upon the whole, the concept of a Sacrament has not been fully developed in the Lutheran Church. The fundamental concepts of the Word and faith have been attached to it in too immediate a fashion." He means to say that there is, indeed, a certain connection between the Word and faith, on the one hand, and the Sacraments, on the other. But it is wrong for the Lutheran Church to connect them so closely, because the Sacraments operate immediately, without the Word and without faith. "To the Apology a Sacrament is merely a qualified Word, '*Verbum visibile, quasi pictura Verbi seu sigillum*' [a visible Word, or, as it were, a picture of the Word, or a seal], which, like the Word, has the power to forgive sins only by faith. In the presence of the Word the *specific blessing of salvation* of each Sacrament is obscured, just as its *specific saving effect* is obscured by faith." Understand, Kahnis, the Lutheran, is rebuking our dear Lutheran Church because it really regards Sacraments as identical with the Word, the only difference being that the Sacraments have a visible element added to them. He declares the faith of the Lutheran Church worthless, *viz.,* that on the part of God nothing but the Word and on the part of man nothing but faith is necessary for

salvation. He insists on a difference between the Word and each Sacrament as regards specific salvational blessings and specific salvational operations. "A baptized person is regenerated and remains so till he dies. . . . The end and aim of the Lord's Supper can be gathered only from its essence. In the Lord's Supper we partake of the glorified body of Christ and therein and therewith of the Spirit and the life of Christ."

This false doctrine of the Modernists is held also by Delitzsch, who formerly occupied an excellent position as regards Lutheran teaching. In his treatise *Four Books Concerning the Church* (1847) he writes on page 33: "Any one who is baptized and partakes of the Lord's Supper is a member of the body of Christ. The body of Christ is the sum total of those who 'by one Spirit are all baptized into one body . . . and have been made all to drink into one Spirit,' 1 Cor. 12, 13. Whether it is Hengstenberg" [who passed for, and until shortly before his death really was, the prototype of orthodox teachers] "or Wislicenus" [a freethinker], "by virtue of the act of God, which faith does not produce nor unbelief can frustrate, they are both members of one and the same body. Whether a person is an Evangelical or a Romanist, a Socinian or a Unitarian, by virtue of their baptism they are all one in Christ." Delitzsch, then, numbers even Unitarians with the visible Christian Church. — On page 42 he says, speaking of unbelieving and wicked persons who had been baptized in infancy: "They may be parts, even organs, of the visible Church, but they are no members of the Church, which is the body of Christ." Delitzsch is here quoting, however, incorrectly, the teaching of the Lutheran Church and proceeds: "We cannot admit that this distinction is justified. A person once baptized is unalterably a member of Christ's body." If the body of Christ contains the ungodly as dead members through whom His life-blood does not circulate, then the body of Christ is partially a corpse. When a person has fallen from his faith and baptismal grace, we do not tell him to construct a new ship for himself in which to continue his voyage to heaven, but to return to his faith in Baptism, which is a covenant that remains unshaken, because God does not cancel the word of promise which He has pledged to the baptized. The renegade, who has come to the knowledge of his fall and is penitent has nothing else to do than to cling to God's promise given him at his baptism, and to rest assured that, since by Baptism he was made a child of God and has now been quickened out of mortal sins, he can rest assured that he will not perish.

THIRTY-FIFTH EVENING LECTURE.

(September 18, 1885.)

Jesus says regarding Himself: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." John 14, 6. Peter confirms this statement by his declaration before the Jewish Sanhedrin, saying: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Acts 4, 12. Paul adds his testimony by telling his Corinthians: "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." 1 Cor. 2, 2. Verily, then, it is a great and awful sin not to draw any soul that has been entrusted to us for instruction to Jesus and not to tell that soul again and again what a treasure it has in the Lord Jesus, its Savior. To keep some one from believing in Christ is such an awful sin that words cannot express it. A preacher who restrains a soul from confidently laying hold of Christ — no matter whether he does it consciously or unconsciously, purposely or from blindness, through malice or as the result of a perverted zeal for the salvation of souls — deprives that soul, as far as he is concerned, of everlasting life. Instead of being a shepherd to that soul, he becomes a ravening wolf to it; instead of being its physician, he becomes its murderer; yea, instead of being an angel of God, he becomes a devil to that person. Alas, ever so many preachers have not realized until their dying day how many souls they have kept away from Christ by their unevangelical preaching and by their own fault have caused the souls entrusted to them to die of spiritual starvation. The result was that these unhappy preachers shortly before their death have had a severe soul-battle to fight with self-accusations and despair, and not a few of them have departed this life without consolation, in anguish, misery, and despair.

The worst offenders in this respect are the so-called rationalistic preachers, who with diabolical audacity mount Christian pulpits and instead of preaching Christ, the Savior, to all sinners, recite their miserable moral precepts for a virtuous life and fill the ears of the people with their empty bombast. To these rationalistic mercenaries, "whose God is their belly," Phil. 3, 19, the terrible woe is addressed, even in our day, which the Lord denounced, saying: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." Matt. 23, 13.

What terror shall seize these preachers who used to call themselves friends and adorers of Jesus Christ when they must appear before His judgment-seat and hear Him address them in words of flaming anger: "I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." Matt. 7, 23.

However, equally grievous is the offense of papists in this respect. They, too, do not draw men to Christ, the Savior and Friend of sinners, but represent Christ as a more rigorous lawgiver even than Moses because He has laid on men many more and much more rigorous commandments than Moses. A poor sinner coming to a priest in his anguish for advice is not directed to Christ, but to Mary, the so-called "Mother of Mercy." They have taught men to be afraid of Christ, telling them that Mary must take them under her sheltering cloak. Or they direct them to some tutelary saint. For this horrible sin of directing poor souls away from Christ they will have to suffer the wrath of God, which will consign them to the place where "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever." Rev. 14, 11. For failing to teach and proclaim Christ, telling men not to believe in Him, is as heinous an offense as blasphemously to brand Christ as a fanatic, as unbelievers do.

Well, it is easy to avoid this gross manner of keeping men away from Christ. I need not warn you against it. But it is difficult to avoid doing the same thing in a more refined manner. Innumerable preachers imagined that they were preaching Christ and proclaiming His doctrine until their eyes were opened and they saw that they had concealed Christ from the eyes of poor sinners and had directed men away from Him rather than to Him. This more refined way of keeping men away from Christ is discussed in our twenty-second Thesis.

Thesis XXII.

In the eighteenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when a false distinction is made between a person's being awakened and his being converted; moreover, when a person's INABILITY *to believe is mistaken for his not* BEING PERMITTED *to believe.*

During the first half of the eighteenth century those who were guilty before others of this serious confusion of Law and Gospel were the so-called Pietists. To these belonged, among others, such theologians of Halle as August Herman Francke, Breithaupt, Anastasius Freylinghausen, Rambach, Joachim Lange, and those who had publicly adopted their views, like Bogatzky, Fresenius, and many others. These men were guilty of that more refined way of

confounding Law and Gospel, namely, of keeping men away from Christ. They did this by making a false distinction between spiritual awakening and conversion; for they declared that, as regards the way of obtaining salvation, all men must be divided into three classes: 1. those still unconverted; 2. those who have been awakened, but are not yet converted; 3. those who have been converted.

Admitting that these Pietists were well-intentioned men and by no means wished to depart from the right doctrine, still their classification was utterly wrong. They would have been right if by people who have been awakened they had understood such persons as occasionally receive a powerful impression of the Word of God, of the Law and of the Gospel, but promptly stifle the impression, so that it is rendered ineffectual. For there are, indeed, men who can no longer continue to live in their carnal security, but suppress their unrest until God smites them again with the hammer of His Law and then makes them taste the sweetness of the Gospel. But the awakened persons to whom the Pietists referred are no longer to be numbered with the unconverted. According to Scripture we can assume only two classes: those who are converted and those who are not.

True, there are people who, when contrasted with true Christians, could be called awakened if they are not measured by the pattern of Holy Scripture. A great number of instances of such people are found in the Scriptures. Herod Antipas was one of them. We are told that he heard John the Baptist gladly because John preached many comforting sermons in which he pointed to the promised Messiah. He also asked John's advice occasionally and followed it. Nevertheless he remained the Herod he had always been. By this king's order John had to lose his head to please a miserable dancing girl.

Another instance is that of Felix, the governor. Paul preached to him with great zest concerning righteousness, temperance (chastity), and judgment to come. Paul's sermon struck home, and his own conscience convicted Felix of being a reprobate, and if Paul preached the truth, which he did, Felix would be lost, fornicator, unjust judge, and adulterer that he was. But he stifled the conviction immediately and dismissed Paul, saying: "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Acts 24, 25. But he never did call for him; he was unwilling to hear that reproving voice again.

A similar instance is that of Festus. When Paul had thundered at him, preaching the Law to him, and then had proclaimed the good

tidings of the Gospel, he cried: "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." Acts 26, 24. Spite of the deep impression which the preaching of Paul had made on him, he declared Paul a fanatic.

Another instance is that of Agrippa, who even said to Paul: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Acts 26, 28. What a powerful impression the apostle's address must have made on the king to wrest this public profession from him that it would not take much to make him one of the despised and maligned Christians! What was lacking to make him a Christian? Nothing else than this, that he would not cease his wilful, stubborn resistance and allow the Lord to overcome him. On the contrary, he tried to conquer the Lord and remained in his unconverted state.

People like these must not be numbered with the converted. But it is wrong to call them awakened. When Scripture speaks of awakening, it always means conversion. You must bear this in mind when reading writings of Pietists, which contain a great deal of good. You must divide men into only two classes. The following passages will show you that by awakening Scripture means conversion: —

Eph. 5, 14: *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* This is evidently a call to genuine conversion and repentance. We are to awake from spiritual sleep and arise from spiritual death. Any one who is thus awakened is roused, not from physical, but from spiritual sleep, and being awake, he has become alive, which means nothing else than that he is a Christian.

Eph. 2, 4—6: *But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved) and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ.* According to this passage being awakened and being quickened are identical. Any one who has been awakened is in a blessed state: he has been translated into a heavenly life the moment he was awakened by the Holy Spirit.

Col. 2, 12: *Buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.* The event described in this text took place "through faith." Accordingly, no one can be awakened unless he has faith. That means, he must be a Christian.

However, Pietists object that a person who has not experienced a genuine, thorough contrition in his heart is not yet converted,

but merely awakened. By thorough contrition they mean a contrition like that of David, who spent whole nights crying and weeping in his bed and walked almost bowed down with grief for days. Any one who has not passed through these experiences, who has not yet been sealed with the Holy Spirit, is not quite assured of his state of grace and of salvation, is always wavering or shows himself uncharitable, lacking genuine patience, and the proper willingness to serve his fellow-men; such a person, they claim, is certainly not a Christian, still unconverted and only awakened. This is an erroneous assumption. A person may have become a true Christian without experiencing the great and terrible anguish of David. For although David really passed through these experiences, the Bible does not say that every one must pass through the same experiences and suffer in the same degree. As regards the sealing with the Holy Spirit, we read in Eph. 1, 13: "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." The sealing presupposes faith, although it may be a very weak faith, a faith that is constantly struggling with anxieties and doubts. God does not grant to every one immediately boldness of faith and heroic courage. That this is the pure unadulterated truth can be seen in every record we have of people that were converted. Take, for instance, the first Pentecostal audience. We are told that these people were pricked in their hearts and asked the apostles: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter does not say to them: "Wait a while; first you must pass through a severe penitential struggle; you will have to wrestle with God and cry to Him for a long time until the Holy Spirit gives you the inward assurance that you have obtained grace and are saved." No; the apostle merely says: "Repent and be baptized," and immediately they received Baptism. "Repent" means : "Turn to your Lord Jesus, believe in Him, and as a seal of your faith receive Baptism, and everything will be right." Of these newly converted people we are told further on: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers." Acts 2, 37. 38. 42. Hence they had become truly converted in a few moments.

The same observation meets us in the case of the Ethiopian treasurer. Philip merely says to him: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest," namely, be baptized. When the treasurer answered: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," Philip was fully satisfied; for he knew what the treasurer meant by his confession, namely, that he believed in the Messiah, God and man. After he had been baptized, they parted and probably never saw

each other again. Philip was not worried in the least whether the man was actually converted; he was quite certain of his conversion because he had declared: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Acts 8, 37 ff.

The jailer at Philippi was in despair, not on account of his sins, but because he feared that he would be executed for allowing all his prisoners to escape. Paul arrested the jailer's hand as he was about to stab himself and cried: "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." The jailer was thunderstruck. He recalled the thoughts that had stirred his heart during the night while he had heard the prisoners whom he had subjected to such cruel treatment praising and glorifying God. Convicted of the wickedness of his heart and the magnitude of his sin, he fell at the apostle's feet, crying: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul did not say to him: "That cannot be done to-night. We shall first have to give you instruction and ascertain the condition of your heart. We admit that you have been awakened, but you are far from being converted." No; he simply said: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." Acts 16, 27 ff. The jailer believed and was filled with joy that he had become a believer. That is all that Paul and Silas did. They left him, and when they had been given their liberty, they proceeded on their journey.

Try to find a single instance in the Scriptures where a prophet, apostle, or any other saint pointed the people another way to conversion, telling them that they could not expect to be converted speedily and that they would have to pass through such and such experiences. They always preached in a manner so as to terrify their hearers, and as soon as their hearers realized that there was no refuge for them, as soon as they condemned themselves, and cried, "Is there no help for us?" they told them: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and all will be well with you."

Fanatics declare that this is not the proper order of conversion. It is not the order of fanatics indeed, but it is God's order. As soon as the Gospel sounded in the ears of the persons aforementioned, it went through their hearts, and they became believers. We read that David, after receiving absolution, still had to suffer a great deal of anguish. But his penitential psalms are at the same time a confession of his assurance that God was gracious to him. It is sheer labor lost when a minister leads a person who has become alarmed over his sins a long way for months and years before that person can say, "Yes, I believe." Such a minister is

a spiritual quack; he has not led that soul to Jesus, but to reliance on its own works. In a certain sense the Pietists have been guilty of this awful sin. It is just those ministers who are manifesting great zeal that are in danger of committing this great and grievous sin. They are sincere and well-intentioned, but they accomplish no more than tormenting souls. To every sinner who has become spiritually bankrupt and asks you: What must I do to be saved? you must say: That is very simple: Believe in Jesus, your Savior, and all is well.

Consider that according to the Scriptures it is not at all difficult to be converted, but to remain in a converted state, that is difficult. Accordingly, it is a false interpretation to refer the words of the Savior: "Enter ye in at the strait gate", Matt. 7, 13, to repentance. Repentance is not a strait gate through which a person has to squeeze. Repentance is something that God Himself must produce in a person. Any kind of repentance which man produces by his own effort is counterfeit and an abomination in the sight of God. We need not worry about our inability to produce repentance in ourselves. We must only apply to ourselves the keen Word of God, and we have the first part of repentance. After that an application of the unqualified Gospel will produce faith in us. All that a person has to do when he hears the Gospel is to accept it. *But this is immediately followed by an inward conflict. The error of false teachers in regard to this matter is that they place this conflict before conversion.* For such a conflict an unconverted person is not qualified. The conflict comes at a later stage, and it is severe. The narrow way is the cross which Christians have to bear, namely, that they have to mortify their own flesh, suffer ridicule, scorn, and ignominy heaped upon them by the world, fight against the devil, and renounce the world with its vanities, treasures, and pleasures. That is a task which causes many to fall away again soon after their conversion and to lose their faith. Wherever the Word of God is proclaimed with the manifestation of the Spirit and power of God, many more people are converted than we imagine. If we could look into the hearts of worshipers in a church where the Word is thus forcefully proclaimed and no works of men are mingled with the teaching of saving grace, we should observe many framing the resolution by the grace of God to become Christians; for they are convinced that the preacher is right. But many suppress these sensations the moment they leave the church and seek to persuade themselves that they have been listening to a discourse of a fanatic. Such persons harden themselves Sunday

after Sunday and get into a most dangerous condition, past conversion. The Savior Himself says that many "receive the Word with joy," Matt. 13, 20, but smother the spouting germ when tribulations arise. This does not necessarily refer to severe diabolical afflictions, but, in general, to tedium as regards spiritual affairs, sluggishness in prayer, negligence in hearing the Word of God, contempt which Christians have to suffer from worldly men, etc. All these things may dissipate the impressions which had been made on the Christians' hearts. In cases like these Pietists declare that there had been no conversion. But does not the Lord say: "For a while they *believe*"? Luke 8, 13. Hence this second class of hearers, who quickly accept the Gospel, begin to *believe;* however, they do not permit the Word to strike root in their hearts, but at the next temptation to which they are exposed they again surrender to the world and their own flesh, and all that they had gained is lost.

Beware, then, of the illusion that men may become secure if they are told how quickly they may be led to repentance and conversion. On the contrary, consider the greatness of God's mercy. After a person has been converted, he must be told that henceforth he will have to be engaged in daily struggles and must think of making spiritual progress day by day, exercising himself in love, patience, and meekness and wrestling with sin. That is a lesson for converted Christians, who begin to cooperate with divine grace in them. But by the utterly abominable teaching of fanatics these spiritual conflicts are placed before conversion, and God is robbed of the honor due Him.

Our Church declares in the *Formula of Concord,* Sol. Decl., Art. II., § 87 (Mueller, p. 609; *Trigl. Conc.,* p. 913 f.): "The conversion of our corrupt will, which is nothing else than a resuscitation of it from spiritual death, is only and solely the work of God (just as also the resuscitation in the resurrection of the body must be ascribed to God alone), as has been fully set forth above and proved by manifest testimonies of Holy Scripture."

Again, the same confession states (Mueller, p. 591; *Trigl. Conc.,* p. 885): "In a word, it remains eternally true what the Son of God says, John 15, 5: 'Without Me ye can do nothing,' and Paul, Phil. 2, 13: 'It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.' To all godly Christians who feel and experience in their hearts a small spark or longing for divine grace and eternal salvation this precious passage is very comforting; for they know that God has kindled in their hearts this beginning of true godliness and that He will further strengthen

and help them in their great weakness to persevere in true faith unto the end."

Where there is a spark of longing for mercy, there is faith; for faith is nothing else than longing for mercy. A person in whom this takes place is not merely awakened in the false sense of the word, but he is converted. It is remarkable that in Phil. 2, 12. 13 the apostle says, first: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," and then continues: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." We are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling for the very reason that our heavenly Father must do everything that is necessary for our salvation. That is what the apostle tells people who have been converted. A person who is hardened, blind, dead, cannot work out his own salvation, but a converted person can, and actually does, work out his own salvation. If he fails to do it, he is again stricken with spiritual blindness and relapses into spiritual death.

Our opponents claim that God first awakens a person and in that act gives him the power to decide whether he will be converted or not. That is a rehash of a false doctrine of former times; it overlooks the fact that a person is either spiritually dead or spiritually alive. They claim that a person must first be given a liberated will, which means that he must be quickened before he is converted.

We can see from *Luther* in what condition those must be who are to be brought to true faith. He says (St. L. Ed. XVIII, 1715): "To begin with, God has given a sure promise to those who have been humbled, *that is, to those who bewail their sin and despair of self-help*. However, no person can thoroughly humble himself until he knows that, regardless of his own strength, counsel, striving, willing, and working, his salvation depends wholly on the good pleasure, counsel, willing, and working of another, namely, of God alone."

Man must be reduced to this strait, that he is convinced of the necessity of his surrendering to God unconditionally because he cannot lift himself out of the mire of his sins. When he is in that condition, he is, in dogmatic terminology, the *materia* (the subject) that is to be converted. It is nothing but labor lost and means robbing God of His honor to urge men to rely on their own efforts towards conversion. That is frequently done by men who are quite serious about their Christianity.

Luther continues: "For as long as a person is convinced that

he has some ability, even if it is altogether trifling, to work out his salvation, he continues to trust in himself and does not at all despair of his own efforts. Accordingly, he does not humble himself before God, and he selects a certain place, time, and work by which he hopes, or at least desires, ultimately to obtain salvation. But a person who entertains no doubt whatever that everything depends on the will of God, utterly despairs of his own effort, does not do any choosing, but expects God to *work* in him, *such a person is closest to divine grace* and salvation. Therefore these things are publicly taught for the sake of the elect, in order that they may be saved after having been humbled and crushed in the manner aforestated. The rest resist this humbling; yea, they reject the teaching that a person must despair of his own efforts and demand that some ability be left them, even though it be quite paltry. These remain secretly proud and enemies of the grace of God. This, I say, is the one reason for teaching the godly who have been humbled to know, to pray for, and to accept the promise of mercy."

Unless a person is reduced to this condition, it is useless to preach the Gospel to him. He is lost as long as he takes comfort in himself or thinks that he can help himself over his difficulties. Accordingly, a minister must first cause people to hear the thundering of the Law and immediately after that the Gospel. Otherwise many a precious soul may be led to despair and be lost. These souls would one day be demanded of the minister; for God will not suffer Himself to be mocked in this matter.

THIRTY-SIXTH EVENING LECTURE.

(September 25, 1885.)

One should think that after their fall into sin and unutterable misery all men would with great joy accept the doctrine of Holy Scripture that a person is made righteous and saved by grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ, and that they would perceive from this very doctrine that the religion of the Bible must be the only correct one, because it is just the religion which poor sinners like them need. Alas! the very opposite is the case. Unto this day the world has again and again stumbled and been offended just at this doctrine of Holy Scripture, which the Apostle Paul has expressed in these words: "So, then, it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God, that showeth mercy." Rom. 9, 16.

Accordingly, the apostle had to testify even in his day: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness." 1 Cor. 1, 23. Yea, in those days it was actually a disgrace, in the opinion of the whole world, to proclaim this Gospel of the free grace of God in Christ Jesus, so that the apostle had to assert: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Rom. 1, 16.

For in every man there is hidden by nature a blind, self-righteous Pharisee. Accordingly, all who have not been enlightened by God through the Holy Spirit imagine that the best and most reliable religion must be a religion that makes the most numerous and most grievous demands upon man in order to gain salvation; for, salvation being something inexpressibly great, man would unquestionably have to achieve something exceedingly great to obtain it. Accordingly, when man as he is by nature observes that certain religionists make their salvation a real irksome task, he imagines that these people surely must be traveling the straight road to heaven.

When the priests of Baal displayed such zeal in the worship of their idol that they "cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out upon them," 1 Kings 18, 28, the poor blind people imagined that they were the true prophets of God and challenged the other prophets to do likewise. This continued until the prophet Elijah, by a miracle, revealed the hypocrisy of the priests of Baal. Again, when the Pharisees and scribes, in the days of Christ, taught the people that, to be saved, they must fulfil the entire Law of Moses, to the very last tittle, and, in addition, keep the traditions of the elders, the poor blind masses imagined that the religion of their Pharisees and scribes must surely be a better religion than that of Christ, who called to Himself even the most besotted and abominable sinners and offered and promised them mercy. Again, when false teachers found their way into the congregations which the Apostle Paul had founded in Galatia, they said to the members of those congregations: "Paul may be a powerful speaker, but he is pointing you a way to salvation that is too easy and too broad." They said that, to be a Christian, one must, among other things, indeed believe in Christ, but besides, that one must also keep the Law of Moses to be saved. In a short time nearly all congregations in Galatia fell away from Paul and his doctrine, being deluded by the false glamor which those false teachers spread about themselves.

That has been the way at all times. Why does such a mass of people, why do so many millions, remain under Popery spite of the fact that Popery has been revealed as antichristian? On account of the glamor of good works with which the papists surround themselves. Why do so many people in our country fall in with the preachers of fanatical sects? Because these sects spread the glamor of great sanctity about themselves. *Alas! man regards the works of God as trifling, but esteems the works of men highly.* That is nothing but one of the sad results of man's fall into sin.

Would that this horrible confounding of Law and Gospel, and, in particular, this horrible leavening of the Gospel with the Law, occurred only in Popery and among the fanatical sects! Sad to say, this takes place even in our dear Evangelical Lutheran Church. It has occurred in former times, and the same error is still proclaimed in our day from Lutheran pulpits, although not in such a crass form. Under this head belongs the error which has been rejected in the second part of our twenty-second thesis, to which we shall now turn out attention.

The so-called Pietists of former times and the preachers of the fanatical sects in our time not only made a false distinction between awakening and conversion and refused to regard those who were awakened as Christians, but they also mistook the inability to believe for not being permitted to believe.

When the Pietists had brought a person to the point where he considered himself a poor, miserable sinner, unable to help himself, and asked his minister what he must now do, the minister did not, like the apostles, answer him: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," but, as a rule, they told him the very opposite. They warned him against believing too soon and against thinking that, after having felt the effects of the Law, he might proceed to believe that his sins had been forgiven. They told him that his contrition must become more perfect, that he must feel contrite, not so much because his sins would call down upon him God's anger and hurl him into perdition, but because he loved God. Unless he could say that he felt sorry for having angered his merciful Father in heaven, his contrition was declared null and void. He was told that he must feel that God was beginning to be merciful to him; he must get so far that he could hear an inner voice telling him: "Be of good cheer; thy sins will be forgiven thee; God will be merciful to thee." He must continue struggling until his agony was over, and having rid himself of the love of sin

and having been thoroughly converted, he might begin to take comfort.

Now, this is an awful method. The truth is, we are not to be converted *first* and *after that* believe; we are not to have a sensation first that we are in possession of grace; but without any feeling we are first to believe that we have received mercy, and after that will come the feeling of mercy, which God apportions to each according to His grace. Some persons are without feeling of grace for a long time. They behold nothing but darkness about them; they feel the hardness of their hearts and the powerful stirring and raging of evil, sinful lust within them. Accordingly, to point a person to the way of salvation, it is not the proper procedure to tell him that, even when he feels himself a poor, lost sinner, he may not yet believe himself saved.

True, no man can produce faith in himself; God must do that. A person may be in such a condition that he cannot believe, and God is not willing to bestow faith on him. A person who still considers himself sound and righteous cannot believe. "The full soul loatheth an honeycomb." Prov. 27, 7. A soul spiritually sated and surfeited tramples on the honeycomb of evangelical consolation.

John 5, 44 we read: *How can you believe which receive honor one of another?* These words, which the Lord addressed to the Jews, are unquestionably directed chiefly against the Pharisees. As long as a person is ambitious of honor, he cannot come to faith, because seeking one's honor is to be numbered with all other mortal sins. By the above statement the Lord has declared that a person who simply will not quit a certain sin, *can* not believe in Him. The Law must first crush the sinner's heart before the sweet comfort of the Gospel is applied to him. But from this fact the inference must be drawn that the sinner *may* not believe. It is forever true that any person may believe at any time. Even when he has fallen into the most grievous sin and, realizing suddenly that he has forsaken God, rises with a crushed heart, he may believe. Whoever tells him that he may not yet believe is either a wicked person or one who in this respect is still blind.

To tell a person that he may not believe is, in the first place, contrary to the perfect redemption of Christ from all sins and to the perfect reconciliation which He has accomplished. For in 1 John 2, 1. 2 the apostle says: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. And He is the Propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." The entire world, then, has been

reconciled. The wrath of God which hung lowering upon the whole world has been removed. Through Jesus Christ, God has become every man's Friend. That is the reason why the holy angels sang even over His cradle: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, *good will toward men.*" Luke 2, 14. In Christ, God showed His good will toward all men.

2 Cor. 5, 14 we read: *If One died for all, then were all dead.* By this precious statement the apostle means to say that, since Christ died, it is the same as if all men had suffered death for their sins, namely, the death which Christ died; it is the same as if all had atoned for their sins by their death. Now that the entire world has been redeemed and reconciled to God, is it not a horrible teaching to tell any person he may not believe that he has been reconciled and redeemed and has the forgiveness of sins? By that doctrine the completeness of redemption and reconciliation with God is shamefully denied.

Furthermore, this doctrine is contrary to the Gospel. After finishing the task of redemption and reconciliation, Christ said to His disciples: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Mark 16, 15. To preach the Gospel means nothing else than bringing to every creature the glad tidings that they have been redeemed, that heaven is opened to all, that all are made righteous, that perfect righteousness has been brought to them by Christ, and that men are but to come and enter by the gate of righteousness even as they shall one day enter by the gate of eternal salvation. Is it not horrible to tell men that they may not believe this? Everybody is to know that the Gospel is for him, that God has had the glad tidings brought to him. For what purpose? In order that he may believe it and take comfort in it. If he refuses to believe it, he declares God and all His prophets and apostles liars. Is it not horrible to tell people who have learned by experience that they are poor, lost sinners and are still mired in sin, that, while God has indeed redeemed them, much remains still to be done on their part before they may believe and be actually redeemed? By this horrible teaching the sinner wants to share with God in the work of redemption. That is nothing short of blasphemy.

Nor does this harmonize with the fact that God has already declared in the presence of heaven and earth, of angels and men: "My Son has reconciled the world to Me. I have accepted His sacrifice. I am satisfied. He was your Surety, and I have set Him free. Therefore rejoice, for you have nothing to be afraid of." By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead God has absolved

the entire world of sinners from their sins. Is it not horrible for men to say that this is indeed a fact, but that a person may not yet believe it? Does not that mean to charge God with lying and to deny the resurrection of Christ from the dead?

Furthermore, this teaching is also contrary to the doctrine of absolution. Christ says to His disciples, Matt. 18, 18: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"; and in John 20, 23: "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." He does not speak of certain qualities which persons must possess, but simply says: "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted"; "Whatsoever ye shall loose shall be loosed." Only a genuine Lutheran believes this; to all sects it is an abomination to hear it. They twist these precious words from the Mouth of Truth so that they are made to say something altogether different from what they really do state. However, it is verily true, my friends, that Jesus Christ, after redeeming the entire world, has given His followers power to forgive every one's sins. Some claim that the meaning of Christ is this: "When a minister notices that a person is in the proper condition, he may persuade him to believe that he has forgiveness of sins. But these are human imaginings; what the Lord says is simply this: "Thy sins are remitted." Moreover, this statement is readily comprehended by any one who believes in the completeness of the redemption and reconciliation with God which Christ accomplished.

To illustrate: Suppose a king has declared that a rebellious town has been granted full amnesty, and no one is to suffer for his sedition. In a case like that anybody can say: "The king has quelled the rebellion; he has conquered you rebels, but you can be of good cheer, because he has pardoned you. I know this for a certainty, because I myself heard the king say so." If the speaker, in addition, were to bring a document signed and sealed by the king which contained the same statement, everybody would rejoice and begin to celebrate the event. The situation is identical with the case now under discussion. By the resurrection of Christ, God has declared that He is reconciled with all mankind and does not intend to inflict punishment on anybody. He has this fact proclaimed in all the world by His Gospel and, in addition, has commanded every minister of the Gospel to forgive men their sins, promising that He will do in heaven what the minister is doing on earth. The minister is not first to look up to heaven to ascertain what God

is doing; he is merely to execute His orders on earth and forgive people's sins, relying on God's promise that He is forgiving them.

To some people this looks like a horrible doctrine, but it is the most comforting doctrine imaginable and is firmly established on the blood of God that was shed on the cross. Sin really has been forgiven, and all that God is now concerned about is that we believe this fact. We absolve men from their sins for no other purpose than to strengthen the faith of those who ask absolution in what they have heard proclaimed from the pulpit. Accordingly, none of them can say: "How can the minister know the condition of my heart? What is absolution to profit me when I am impenitent?" Answer: "Indeed, in that case it is of no benefit, but it is of benefit when it is believed. However, this is certain that you have been absolved. Your eternal punishment will be all the more grievous because you did not believe the absolution which God Himself has pronounced to all sinners and which He has ordered His ministers to continue to pronounce to them."

This applies also to the Sacraments. The water in Baptism saves us. When the Lord offers communicants the blessed bread and says: "This is My body, which is given for you," it is plain that He means to tell them, they must believe, or His body will not benefit them. A person who believes that Christ, by sacrificing His body, has paid for the communicant's sins can leave the altar rejoicing and exulting. When the Lord, offering the cup, says: "This is My blood, which is shed for you, for the remission of sins," He means to emphasize particularly the words "for the remission of sins" and to cause every communicant who believes them to shout inwardly with joy when he goes home from church after communing.

Lastly, mistaking inability to believe for not being permitted to believe is contrary to the practise of the apostles. Whenever a person showed the mark of a poor sinner, they told him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; they never asked him to wait until his condition had more fully developed. To his hearers on the first festival of Pentecost, Peter said that, while they had hated Christ, they were now believing in Him and should be baptized in His name. Remember also the instance of the jailer at Philippi which I have adduced so often. Fanatics, unless they plead ignorance of the apostles' practise, object to that practise because they claim that they would preach people into carnal security and ultimately into hell by that method. Well, the blessed apostles, 'tis true, also had the sad experience of seeing that hypocrites had found

their way into their congregations. I shall merely point to the instance of Simon, the sorcerer. We are told: "Simon himself believed also," Acts 8, 13, namely, before the eyes of men, but he was revealed later as an altogether wicked man. That did not cause the apostles to become "more cautious" and to resolve not always to invite people to believe in the Lord Jesus. We find no evidence to that effect. For all the beautiful instances of sinners being invited by the apostles to believe immediately upon their confession of sin follow after the account of Simon, the sorcerer.

It is, likewise, great folly to appeal to one's good intention. Pietists and many preachers among the fanatics have reasoned that, to make the conversion of their hearers thorough, they must not allow them to appropriate what does not yet belong to them because it would prove a false comfort to them. But this reasoning is a great piece of fanaticism. They ought to reflect that our heavenly Father is wiser than they. He knew very well that, when the consolations of the Gospel are imparted to all hearts, many will imagine that they, too, can believe them. But that is no reason why these consolations should be hushed up. We must not starve the children from fear that the dogs would get something of the children's food, but we are cheerfully to proclaim the universal grace of God freely and leave it to God whether people will believe it or misapply it. When a trench has been dug for the erection of a very solid building the trench must not be kept open too long lest a rainstorm fill it up and all previous labor be lost. A good builder promptly lays the foundation in the trench. Now, the digging of the foundation takes place spiritually when men are convicted of their sins. That done, the Gospel must be promptly applied to their hearts, and the entire structure of Christianity must be reared upon that. Or take another illustration. When a physician has squeezed out an ulcer, he does not decide to wait two weeks before applying the soothing balm. He puts it on immediately, lest the wound become dangerously infected and prove deadly. When the ulcers of men's sins have been squeezed out, the soothing balm of the Gospel must be applied immediately. That is the correct method, while that of the Methodists is wrong.

Let us now hear a few testimonies from *Luther's* writings regarding this matter. He writes (St. L. Ed. XI, 1141): "While the first kind of preaching, namely, that of the Law, is going on, men are filled with anxiety when they think of God and discover that they are damned with all their doings; they do not know what to do; their conscience becomes evil and timid, *and if no one comes*

to their rescue speedily, they have to despair. Therefore the other kind of preaching must not be delayed a long time: the Gospel must be preached to them; they must be brought to Christ, whom the Father has given us for our Mediator that we might be saved by Him from pure grace and mercy, without any works and merits of our own. That is what makes the heart cheerful; it hastens to this grace like a famished deer to the water. David felt that when, in Ps. 42, 1. 2, he wrote: 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.' "

Many a person might have been saved if the Gospel in its fulness had been preached to him immediately. Since it was not preached to him, he either gave himself over completely to despair, or he joined the world and decided that the Church was worthless.

In a sermon on Easter Sunday, *Luther* says (St. L. Ed. XII, 1586): "Now, then, the benefit of the suffering and resurrection of Christ is this: He did not undergo these things in His own behalf, but in behalf of the entire world; He trampled under foot the devil and my sin which on Good Friday were suspended on the cross together with Him, and the devil must now flee at the mention of the name of Christ. If you wish to make use of these great treasures, behold, He has already bestowed them on you as a gift. *Do but accord Him the honor of receiving them with thanks.*" Ponder this last statement: The gift has already been made; it is only for the sinner to accept it.

Again, *Luther* says in a sermon on Pentecost Monday (St. L. Ed. XI, 1104): "It is none of our doing and cannot be merited by our works; it has already been bestowed on us as a gift and handed over to us. All that is necessary is that you open your mouth, or rather your heart, and let God fill it. Ps. 81, 10. That can be done in no other way than by your believing these words ["God so loved the world," etc.], as you are here told that faith is required for appropriating this treasure in its entirety." This is what is missing in all other churches: *They do not believe that redemption has been completely bestowed as a gift on all men.* They imagine that the Gospel is merely an instruction regarding what man must do in order to be reconciled with God after he has been reconciled by Christ. This is a self-contradiction.

Lastly, *Luther* writes (St. L. Ed. XI, 733 f.) "Accordingly, unbelief is nothing else than blasphemy and brands God a liar. For when I say to you: 'Thy sins are forgiven thee in the name of God,' and you do not believe it, your action is tantamount to say-

ing: 'Who knows whether it is true, whether God really means what He says?' If you do not believe, it would be better for you to be far removed from the Word of God. For God wants to have the preaching of His Word to be regarded as nothing less than His own preaching. Now, this is the authority which every Christian possesses as a gift from God. Of this matter I have spoken a great deal many times; therefore let this suffice."

Most people, when they are being absolved, reason thus: "That is, indeed, very comforting, provided I know that I am in the proper condition to receive it." Now, that is not at all what God wants, but after redemption has been acquired, He wants it communicated to all. The situation is exactly as if God were standing before us and were pronouncing absolution to us. What would we do if God were to manifest Himself to us as standing before us with life and death in His hands, calling us by name and saying: "Thy sins are forgiven thee"? With what joy would we depart from His presence and shout: "No devil shall make salvation unreliable to me!" Now, when a preacher absolves some one, *it is God who is doing that.* He does not want to deal with us immediately, but mediately. When hearing a Lutheran minister pronounce absolution, the sects imagine our doctrine to be that by his ordination a minister has received a mysterious power, a peculiar ability to look into men's hearts. However, that is not what we teach, but we are absolving men whenever we preach the Gospel. The trouble is only that many are in the pews before us who do not believe our preaching and go home after the service as condemned and hardened sinners; but the children of God rejoice over the good sermon they have heard and return to their homes with the feeling that they have been eased from the burden of their sins.

THIRTY-SEVENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(October 2, 1885.)

One of the most necessary and important qualities of a minister, my friends, is this, that he is animated by a sincere and ardent zeal to discharge his office properly and accomplish something of real value in the sight of God, namely, to pluck every soul that has been entrusted to him from hell, lead it to God, make it truly godly, and bring it into heaven. A faithful minister must have definitely given up seeking after good times, money and possessions, honor and

renown, in this world. His supreme joy must be the assurance that his labor in the Lord is not in vain. That must be the most delightful reward for all his great and grievous anxieties and concerns. Daily and hourly the sigh, uttered by the aged and upright Pastor Lollmann in one of his beautiful morning hymns, must arise in his heart: —

O God, whose bread is feeding me,
Would I were of some use to Thee!

The most exalted example of genuine zeal in the discharge of one's office unquestionably is Paul, the great apostle to the heathen, who, in his great zeal for the salvation of his brethren according to the flesh, went so far as to say that he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his kinsmen. Rom. 9, 3. *Luther's* opinion regarding this zeal is thus expressed in his *Church Postil:* "No reason can grasp what the apostle is doing: it is too sublime a thought that a preacher would rather be accursed himself than be the cause why any soul entrusted to him must perish."

However, while genuine zeal in the discharge of one's office is necessary and important, this cannot be said regarding any kind of zeal. There is a false, ungodly, carnal zeal that does not come from God and is not produced by the Holy Spirit, but is rooted either in animosity against those who teach a different doctrine or in the selfish thought that a display of zeal will bring the minister honor, at least in certain congregations, or in fanaticism. In the days of Christ, what zeal in the discharge of their office do we behold in the high priests, elders, scribes, and Pharisees who opposed Christ! They shunned no trouble and never tired of using their authority against Him. Accordingly, Paul says concerning the Jews: "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Rom. 10, 2. What zeal was shown by the false teachers who tried to make the congregations in Galatia distrustful of the pure evangelical doctrine of St. Paul! They traversed land and sea in their efforts; but the apostle says concerning them: "He that troubled you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be." Gal. 5, 10. He means to say: "No matter how highly you esteem him as a great hero of faith, he has made you doubt the evangelical doctrine that you are saved by grace, through faith alone, for Christ's sake." What great zeal was manifested by the Anabaptists in Luther's time! For the sake of their religion they forsook house and home, wife and children, and a great number of them suffered drowning rather than revoke their doctrine. But why cite instances? All church history proves, and our own experience in this country corroborates, the assertion that false

spirits, fanaticists, manifest greater zeal in inculcating upon people their doctrine than orthodox teachers in preaching the pure truth into men's hearts. It is easy to explain why this is so. Preachers of false, man-made teachings are not hindered in, but incited to, their activity by their reason and their flesh and blood, while preachers of the pure doctrine of God's Word are continually restrained by their reason and their flesh and blood. That makes their task a thousand times more difficult. It is easy to speak from out of one's natural heart; but it is difficult to proclaim the truth on the basis of God's Word after earnestly searching the same, after fervent prayer, and after earnest struggles for enlightenment by the Holy Spirit. Why is it so difficult? Chiefly because it is so difficult rightly to divide the Word of Truth, or to separate properly the Law from the Gospel, and in no wise to confound these two doctrines, as the Apostle Paul requires of every approved laborer in the vineyard of God. Our twenty-third thesis utters a warning regarding this matter.

Thesis XXIII.

In the nineteenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when an attempt is made, by means of the demands or the threats or the promises of the Law, to induce the unregenerate to put away their sins and engage in good works and thus become godly; on the other hand, when an endeavor is made, by means of the commands of the Law rather than by the admonitions of the Gospel, to urge the regenerate to do good.

The attempt to make men godly by means of the Law and to induce even those who are already believers in Christ to do good by holding up the Law and issuing commands to them, is a very gross confounding of Law and Gospel. This is altogether contrary to the purpose which the Law is to serve after the Fall. This will very readily become manifest when we examine, among others, the following passages of Scripture: —

Jer. 31, 31—34: *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the Land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an Husband unto them, said the Lord; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they*

shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. This precious, valuable text is like a sun that rose suddenly upon the gray dawn of the Old Testament. We see from it that, while the Law was written into the hearts of men even before the Fall, it did not serve the purpose of making men godly; for man had been created godly and righteous in the sight of God. The only reason why men had to have the Law in their hearts was that they might know what is pleasing to God. No special command was needed to inform them on that point. They simply willed whatever was God-pleasing; their will was in perfect harmony with the will of God. This condition was changed by the Fall. True, God, after the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, repeated the Law and reestablished a legal covenant with the Jews. However, what did the Lord tell them by the prophet Jeremiah? This, that the legal covenant had not improved their condition, because God had to force them to comply with His will, — and forced obedience simply is no obedience. Accordingly, He speaks to them prophetically of a time when He will make an entirely different arrangement. That does not mean that the new arrangement was not in force even in the time of the Old Testament. The covenant, so far as it had been established with the Israelites, was a legal covenant. Yet during the time of this covenant the prophets were continually preaching the Gospel and pointing to the Messiah. Concerning the new covenant which God purposes to establish He says that He is not going to issue any commandments, but is going to write the Law directly into their mind and give them a new and pure heart, so that they shall not need to be plagued with the Law, with enforcements and urgings: Thou shalt do this! Thou shalt do that! because that will not help matters at all. We cannot fulfil the Law either. We are by nature carnal, and manifestations of the spirit are not forced from us by the Law. God says: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." That is why the Law is written into our hearts. That means nothing else than this, that what the Law could not effect is accomplished by the Gospel, by the message of the forgiveness of sins. All that were saved in the Old Testament were saved in no other way, as Peter expressly declared at the first apostolic council. Now, then, what are those doing who make such a perverse use of the Law in

the time of the New Testament? They turn Christians into Jews, and that, Jews of the worst kind, who regard only the letter of the Law and not the promise of the Redeemer. Not only do they mingle the Law with the Gospel, but they substitute the Law for the Gospel.

Rom. 3, 20: *Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the Law is the knowledge of sin.* The plain meaning of the remarkable reason which the apostle offers for his statement is this: At the present time the Law has no other purpose than to reveal men's sins, not to remove them. Instead of removing them, it rather increases them; for when a person conceives evil lust in his heart, the Law calls to him: "Thou shalt not covet." That causes man to regard God as cruel in demanding what man cannot accomplish. Thus the Law increases sin: it does not slay sin, but rather makes it alive.

Rom. 7, 7—13: *What shall we say, then? Is the Law sin? God forbid! Nay, I had not known sin but by the Law; for I had not known lust except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* This is the most appalling feature of our condition, that, as we are by nature, we do not know hereditary sin and imagine, when evil lusts arise in us and we do not exactly delight in them, that God will not lay them to our charge. However, the Law serves notice on us that evil lust renders us damnable in the sight of God. *But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.* Even pagans, the wicked Ovid among them, have declared: *"Nitimur in vetitum, semper cupimusque negata."* That means: We desire the very things which are forbidden. If they had not been forbidden, we might not desire them. The prohibition rouses our desire and a rebellious thought like this in us: "What? Is this to be denied us?" The fall of Adam proves this: The devil had quickly turned him to his side when he said: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" Gen. 3, 1. That brought about the fall of our first parents. *For without the Law sin was dead.* While the spiritual meaning of the Law remains unperceived by man, sin lies dormant in his heart, like a frozen serpent. Man does not observe what an utterly corrupt creature he is, and while this condition lasts, he may not break forth in gross crimes. But as soon as the Law is proclaimed to him in its spiritual meaning, he becomes malicious and cries: "What? Am I to be damned because sin is stirring within me?" Yes, indeed; the Law damns him; if he refuses to believe it, he will learn by experience that this is so. That is all the Law can do. *For I was*

alive without the Law once. Paul means to say that he did not know the Law because he was so blind that he regarded himself as being without the Law. It is of no benefit, then, that people know the Ten Commandments if they do not understand their spiritual meaning. *But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me and by it slew me. Wherefore the Law is holy and the commandment holy and just and good. Was, then, that which is good made death unto me? God forbid! But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.*

2 Cor. 3, 6: *For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.* If the Law kills, how can it make a person godly? For these words do not mean: "The letter of the Holy Scriptures kills." That is usually the way rationalists and also the Evangelicals (*Unierte*) interpret them. In consequence of this ungodly and abominable perversion of the words, these people say: One must not stick to the mere words. The context shows that by the term "letter" the apostle means nothing else than the Law. That kills and therefore cannot make any one godly. It may accomplish this much, that on account of it we quit this or that vice, but it cannot change our heart.

Ps. 119, 32: *I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart.* The psalmist does not say: "When Thou smitest me with the thunder of Thy Law, I shall run the way of Thy commandments. No; in that case I do not run. But when Thou comfortest me so that my cramped heart is made large, I become cheerful and willing to walk the strait, the narrow, way to heaven."

That is an experience which you may have made personally. After a long season of sluggishness and lukewarmness, during which you began to hate yourself because you saw no way to change your condition, you happen to hear a real Gospel sermon, and you leave the church a changed man and rejoice in the fact that you may believe and are a child of God. You suddenly become aware of the fact that it is not difficult to walk in the way of God's commandments; you seem to walk in it of your own accord. How foolish, then, is a preacher who thinks that conditions in his congregation will improve if he thunders at his people with the Law and paints hell and damnation for them. That will not at all improve the people. Indeed, there is a time for such preaching of the Law in order to alarm secure sinners and make them contrite, but a change

of heart and love of God and one's fellow-men is not produced by the Law. If any one is prompted by the Law to do certain good works, he does them only because he is coerced, even as the Israelites had to be coerced by the covenant of the Law.

Gal. 3, 2: *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the Law or by the hearing of faith?* The Galatians had suffered themselves to be misled into regarding Paul's preaching of salvation by faith, through the grace of Christ alone, as very imperfect, to say the least, and hence as a dangerous doctrine by which a person might easily be led into perdition. Accordingly, they accepted the false prophets' doctrine of the Law. With great sadness Paul learned that these congregations, which he had founded himself and which had flourished wonderfully, were being disrupted and devastated by false teachers. Accordingly, he asked them the question in our text, his object being to remind them of the great change which had taken place in them when he preached to them the sweet Gospel of God's mercy. He called to their minds that they had received the Spirit, namely, the spirit of rest, of peace, of faith, of joy. He asks them: "Where is the blessedness ye spake of?" Yea, he says: "If it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me." Gal. 4, 15. So thoroughly had they been seized by the grace of God, and so vividly had they perceived what a glorious, heavenly, precious doctrine Paul's was. They were transformed in heart, soul, and mind. The apostle wants them now to tell him whether they had received this new, heavenly peace in their hearts, this spiritual joy, this exceedingly great confidence, through the false teachers who had dragged them back into bondage under the Law. The apostle knew that the members of the congregations in Galatia went about sad and depressed, uncertain of their salvation. They were like men bewitched. They imagined, since salvation was such a great treasure, they must do something great for it, and their later teachers impressed this upon them as their duty. They regarded their misery, their unfitness for everything good, as something for which they had themselves to blame and not the false doctrine that had been put in their hearts.

Remember what the apostle is saying in this text. If you want to revive your future congregations and cause the Spirit of peace, joy, faith, and confidence, the childlike spirit, the Spirit of soul-rest, to take up His abode among the members of your congregation, you must, for God's sake, not employ the Law to bring

that about. If you find your congregations in the worst condition imaginable, you must, indeed, preach the Law to them, but follow it up immediately with the Gospel. You may not present the Law to them to-day and postpone preaching the Gospel to them until a later time. As soon as the Law has done its work, the Gospel must take its place.

This abominable confounding of Law and Gospel is practised in the grossest form by rationalists. There really are rationalistic preachers who regard the Gospel as a dangerous doctrine, a doctrine that makes men secure and unwilling to strive after godliness, because they are constantly being told that a person is made righteous and saved by faith alone. To make people godly, they preach ethics with great earnestness. What do these rationalists accomplish? The most zealous of them accomplish no more than this, that some of their hearers adopt a certain kind of probity and abstain from gross, shameful vices and crimes, but regard it as something not to be thought of that they must obtain a new heart and love God and their fellow-men. If some one were to arise in a congregation of such people and declare with great joy that he is loving God above all things and that God is his all, that He is everything to him, he would be regarded as speaking out of his mind. Such people have not the least inkling that it is possible to love God above all things. The Second Table of the Law receives no better treatment from them than the First. Little it is that a member of a so-called "free" congregation knows of the Second Table, spite of the zealous preaching of virtue and piety by his minister. When he returns from church, he proceeds to cheat people in enormous fashion and calls that "business." He may be merged in sin and shame and pass for an honorable man. On occasion he may show himself liberal and give a hundred dollars to-day, but cheat people out of a thousand to-morrow. His maxim is: Charity begins at home. When he is reproved for not conducting his business in the interest of his fellow-men, but for the purpose of making a lot of money, he considers that fanaticism. You see, by means of the Law we cannot raise anything better than miserable hypocrites.

The situation among the papists is similar. They know nothing of the free grace of God in Jesus Christ. They preach ethics continually, interspersed with all sorts of references to Mary and the saints, but not a word of the Gospel. They do not direct the poor sinner to Christ, but represent Christ as the Judge of all the world and urge men to seek help from the saints who are to intercede for them with Christ and make Christ gracious to them. That is

the diabolical teaching of the antichristian Papacy. What do they accomplish? What is the fruit of their teaching? Read the reports from countries in which the papists are dominant and are not being watched by the Protestants. Conditions in those countries and the lives of the priests are most abominable. The people know that their priest is the father of a number of illegitimate children; but since he has received ordination, they believe that one can obtain forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation from him. The most faithful Catholics are the Irish, a vulgar people who practise all kinds of knavery and go to confession at Easter, where they recite their wrong-doings to the priest, have a money fine imposed on them, or are told to fast or eat fish on such and such days — and their account is settled. What an abominable practise!

However, this confounding of Law and Gospel occurs not only among rationalists and papists, but also in the orthodox Church, in numerous instances. It is committed, in the first place, by such as have arrived at the assurance of their state of grace only after much struggling and great anguish. They may have struggled for many years, refusing to be comforted, because they did not know the pure doctrine. When such people start out to proclaim the pure doctrine, they always intersperse their Gospel-preaching with remarks which cause their hearers to say to themselves that the preacher must be a godly man, but that he does not know what poor men his hearers are; for they are sure that they cannot meet the requirements laid down by the preacher. These preachers represent the best type among errorists of this kind.

In the second place, this confounding of Law and Gospel occurs when ministers become aware that all their Gospel-preaching is useless because gross sins of the flesh still occur among their hearers. There may be drunkards among them or people who indulge in fist-fights, etc. These people come to church occasionally, but rarely to Communion and refuse to contribute when a collection is taken up. Now, the preacher may come to the conclusion that he has preached too much Gospel to them and must adopt a different policy; he must hush the Gospel for a while and preach nothing but the Law, and conditions will improve. But he is mistaken; the people do not change, except that they become very angry with their minister for not permitting them to do what they very much like to do. A collection is taken up, which nets twenty cents, when he had expected twenty dollars. He resolves to give these people hell and damnation next Sunday. Possible he may increase the collection by a few dollars, but the offering is worthless in the

sight of God, because it was made under coercion. Would a planter be pleased with slaves whom he sees, as a rule, lazily lounging about the plantation working only at the crack of a whip? Certainly not. Neither does God love service rendered under coercion. Preachers who have succeeded in abolishing certain evils by the preaching of the Law must not think that they have achieved something great. Even the most corrupt congregation can be improved, however, by nothing else than the preaching of the Gospel in all its sweetness. The reason why congregations are corrupt is invariably this, that its ministers have not sufficiently preached the Gospel to the people. It is not to be wondered at that nothing has been accomplished by them; for the Law kills, but the Spirit, that is, the Gospel, makes alive.

Let me submit *Luther's* comment on Rom. 12, 1 ("I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God"). He writes (St. L. Ed. XII, 318): "Paul does not say: I command you; for he is preaching to such as are already Christians and godly by faith, in newness of life. These must not be coerced by means of commandments, but admonished to do willingly what has to be done with the old sinful man in them. *For any person who does not do this willingly, simply in answer to kind admonitions, is not a Christian; and any person who wants to achieve this result by force applied to such as are unwilling is not a Christian preacher or ruler, but a worldly jailer.* A preacher of the Law comes down on men with threats and punishments; a preacher of divine grace coaxes and urges men by reminding them of the goodness and mercy which God has shown them. For he would have no unwilling workers nor cheerless service; he wants men to be glad and cheerful in the service of God. Any person who will not permit himself to be coaxed and urged with sweet and pleasant words, which remind him of the mercy of God abundantly bestowed upon him in Christ, to do good joyfully and lovingly to the honor of God and for the benefit of his fellow-men, is worthless, and all that is done for him is labor lost. If he is not melted and dissolved in the fire of heavenly love and grace, how can he be softened and made cheerful by laws and threats? It is not a man's mercy, but the mercy of God that is bestowed on us; and this mercy Paul wants us to consider in order that we may be incited and moved by it to serve God."

It is a shocking sight to see a preacher do all he can to produce dead works and turn the members of his congregation into hypocrites in the sight of God. When good works are forced from men by the threats or even by the promises of the Law, they are not

good works. Only those are good works which a person does freely and from the heart. Everybody knows that. When a person whose funds are low is approached by a beggar and he reluctantly gives him an alms, his conscience tells him that the deed was worthless because it was done from constraint and not willingly. Or if some one makes you a present and you notice that he does it only to obtain a favor from you, you will not relish the present. You rejoice over a gift only when you know that it has been given from love. Even the most beautiful present is loathed when it is given under constraint. To our Father in heaven, likewise, forced gifts are repulsive.

An enforcer of laws, like a jailer, is not concerned about the condition of the heart of the person with whom he must deal, but only about enforcing that person's obedience. He stands before his victim with a scourge and tells him that the scourge will come down on his back if he does not obey. The jailer is not concerned about godly motives among his prisoners. The prisoners, on the other hand, while they are fast in stocks and in their cells and are forced to obey, are revolving plans in their minds how to avoid being caught at their next theft. That is what a preacher of the Law does to the members of a Christian congregation: he puts them in stocks and fetters them.

Let no minister think that he cannot induce the unwilling to do God's will by preaching the Gospel to them and that he must rather preach the Law and proclaim the threatenings of God to them. If that is all he can do, he will only lead his people to perdition. Rather than act the policeman in his congregation, he ought to change the hearts of his members in order that they may without constraint do what is pleasing to God with a glad and cheerful heart. A person who has a real understanding of the love of God in Christ Jesus is astonished at its fire, which is able to melt anything in heaven and on earth. The moment he believes in this love he cannot but love God and from gratitude for his salvation do anything from love of God and for His glory. It is a useless effort to try to soften with laws and threatenings such hearts as are not melted by having the love of God in Christ Jesus presented to them. The best preachers are those who in this respect do as Luther did, such as preach the Law only accomplish nothing. In such measure as you exhibit the Law in its spiritual meaning, in that measure you sink your hearers into despair, but do not make them willing to serve God.

In conclusion, let me cite to you what Luther says in explana-

tion of the words in Ps. 110, 3: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauty of holiness." The prophet means to say: "At the present time, sacrifices are not offered to God willingly, but in dread terror of hell and from fear. But when Thou shalt have conquered, after the completion of Thy redeeming work, then people shall offer willing sacrifices." *Luther* writes (St. L. Ed. V, 988 f.): "Furthermore, when the point is reached where preachers purpose to teach the people what God requires of us and preach the Law, or Ten Commandments, with their threats of punishment, and their promises of blessings to incite and urge men to godliness, it is possible that some may be moved to attempt being godly and serving God and exercising themselves diligently and earnestly in the works of the Law, as St. Paul did before he was converted and became a Christian." Saul was quite earnest in his efforts, but all his doings were hypocritical; for the Law accomplishes no more than to make people perform outward acts, in which their hearts do not cooperate. It leads men to a pharisaical knowledge of the Law and to pharisaical activities. "However, all this is sheer hypocrisy and mere external piety, under constraint of the Law, and does not pass muster in the sight of God. There is not yet any cordial love for the Law in it nor any cheerfulness of heart to do the Law; no genuine inward obedience, fear, trust, or knowledge of God. Yea, such people do not know or understand that the Law requires perfect obedience of the heart; they do not recognize their sins and disobedience; they behold the Law only through a veil and continue in their blindness, never understanding what God requires from them and how far they are from rendering it. But when *the Law reaches its culmination* and puts forth its best and principal effort, by bringing man to a clear knowledge and understanding that God requires of him perfect obedience with all his heart, that he is not rendering, and cannot render, such obedience, and hence feels in and about himself nothing than sins and the anger of God, then it is that *the real, horrible disobedience against God begins to stir in him,* and he realizes the utter inability of his nature to render such obedience and the futility of forcing from him cordial and willing obedience to God by the Law. He finds that the very opposite effect is produced in him: sentenced by the Law, subjected to the anger of God, and condemned to hell, his nature begins to hate the Law and conceives a horrible anger and bitter hatred against God, sin is becoming very sinful in him, and he falls into blasphemy, despair, and eternal death, unless he is rescued out of this condition by the Gospel of Christ."

THIRTY-EIGHTH EVENING LECTURE.

(October 23, 1885.)

Many ministers, not at all inefficient otherwise, imagine that they have accomplished much, in fact, that they have achieved their aim, when they have roused their hearers from their carnal security and reduced them to a state of mind where they despair of their being in a state of grace and of their salvation. It is, indeed, necessary that every person who is to be saved be brought out of his false security, false comfort, false peace, and false hopes. He must, indeed, be made to despair of salvation and of his present condition. But that is merely a preparatory stage through which he must pass; it is not the matter of chief importance nor the chief aim that is to be achieved with regard to him. The principal matter is that he attain to full assurance of his state of grace and his salvation, so that he may exult, as a pardoned sinner, with the godly poet Woltersdorf and sing: —

I know, yes, I know, and shall e'er be maintaining,
That, as sure as God's hands in His kingdom are reigning,
As sure as His sun does the heavens adorn,
His pardon for sinners to me has been borne.

That such is the principal aim of an evangelical minister there can be no doubt. For the minister must preach the Gospel to those entrusted to him; he must bring them to faith in Christ, baptize them, and administer absolution and the Lord's Supper to them. However, preaching the Gospel means nothing else than telling men that they have been reconciled, perfectly reconciled, with God by Christ. Living, genuine faith of the heart means nothing else than the divine assurance that one has the forgiveness of sins and that the gates of heaven are open to him. Baptizing a person means nothing else than taking him out of the world of lost sinners, by the command and in the name and place of God, and giving him the solemn assurance that God is gracious to him, that God is his Father, and that he, the baptized person, is God's child; that the Son of God is his Savior and the baptized His child and already saved; that the Holy Spirit is his Comforter and the baptized an abode of the Holy Spirit. Administering absolution to a person means nothing else than saying to him by the command and in the name and place of Christ: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Administering Holy Communion to a person means nothing else than saying to him in the name of Jesus: "You, too, are to share in the great achievement of redemption. To confirm your claim in it,

this precious pledge is given you, namely, the body and blood of Christ, the ransom with which He purchased the entire world."

An examination of the Scriptures reveals the fact that the aim of all true ministers has been to train their hearers so that they could declare themselves children of God and heirs of salvation. When Christ said to His disciples: "Rejoice because your names are written in heaven," Luke 10, 20, He evidently called upon them to rejoice in the certainty of their salvation. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. 6, 11. Peter writes to the Christians living in the dispersion: "Ye were as sheep going astray; but ye are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." 1 Pet. 2, 25. John says to his spiritual children, including himself in the statement: "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3, 2. Nowhere in the Holy Scriptures do we find the apostles treating the members of their congregations as if they were uncertain regarding their standing with God; their treatment of them is always such that one can see they presuppose that their members, spite of their weaknesses and blemishes, are dear, beloved children of God.

Conditions are different in our time. As a rule, even the best ministers are well satisfied if they have trained their people to come to them occasionally and complain that they have no assurance of their salvation, that they are afraid they would be lost if they were to die the next night. A complaint like this alarms a truly evangelical minister whose aim is to get his hearers to profess: "I know that my Redeemer liveth. I know in whom I have believed." But ministers who are not truly evangelical take this complaint as evidence that they have made good Christians out of their hearers.

What is the reason that so many in our day live in uncertainty about their being true Christians? The reason is that ministers, as a rule, confound Law and Gospel and do not heed the apostolic admonition: "Study to show thyself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." 2 Tim. 2, 15. For when the Gospel is preached with an admixture of Law, it is impossible for a hearer to attain to faith in the forgiveness of his sins. On the other hand, when the Law is preached with an admixture of Gospel, it is impossible for a hearer to arrive at the knowledge that he is a poor sinner in need of the forgiveness of sins.

Thesis XXIV.

In the twentieth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the unforgivable sin against the Holy Ghost is described in a manner as if it could not be forgiven because of its magnitude.

This current description of the unpardonable sin is a horrid confounding of Law and Gospel.

Only the Law condemns sin; the Gospel absolves the sinner from all sins without an exception. The prophet writes: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Is. 1, 18. The Apostle Paul writes, Rom. 5, 20: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Accordingly, Luther sings out in a glorious strain: —

Though great our sins and sore our woes,
His grace much more aboundeth;
His helping love no limit knows,
Our utmost need it soundeth.

Now, then, what does Holy Scripture say regarding the sin against the Holy Ghost? Concerning this sin we have three parallel passages in the synoptic gospels, a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and one in the First Epistle of St. John. These passages are the real seat of doctrine for the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Matt. 12, 30—32: *He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad. Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.* This is the principal passage. It states, to begin with, that all blasphemy against the Father and the Son shall be forgiven; only the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven. Now, it is certain that the Holy Spirit is not a more glorious and exalted person than the Father and the Son, but He is coequal with them. Accordingly, the meaning of this passage cannot be that the unforgivable sin is blasphemy against the person of the Holy Spirit; for blasphemy against the Father and the Son is exactly the same sin. The blasphemy to which our text refers is directed *against the office,* or operation, of the Holy Spirit; whoever spurns the office of the Holy Spirit, his sin cannot be forgiven. The office of the Holy Spirit is to call men to Christ and to keep them with Him.

The text mentions in particular, that the person committing this sin "*speaketh* against the Holy Ghost." This shows that the sin in question is not committed by blasphemous thoughts that arise in the heart. Not infrequently dear Christians imagine they have committed this sin when they are visited with horrid thoughts of which they cannot rid themselves. Our Lord Christ foresaw this, and for that reason He informed us that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost that is not forgiven must have been uttered by the mouth. The devil shoots his fiery darts into the hearts of the best Christians, causing them to revolve in their hearts the most horrible thoughts against their heavenly Father and against the Holy Spirit, however, against their will. Earnest Christians have complained that, while going to Communion, they have been harassed with the most horrible thoughts against the Holy Ghost. Such thoughts are devil's filth. When I am sitting in a beautiful room with the windows open and a bad boy throws dirt into the room, I am not responsible for this. In His wise providence God permits His dear children to be vexed day and night with such thoughts. The best preachers have met with such instances among the members of their congregations. But that is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, which consists in blasphemy that is pronounced orally.

I have had to treat spiritually a girl who even uttered thoughts of this kind, but at the same time fell on the ground, weeping and moaning to be delivered from her affliction by God. She did not come to rest until she realized that it was not she that was uttering those thoughts. Satan had taken possession of her lips. Of course, Modernists, who deny such power of the devil, call this explanation a superstitious notion.

Mark 3, 28—30: *Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.* Here we have the record of an actual blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. When Christ, by the finger of God, cast out devils, the Pharisees, who had come down from Jerusalem, declared this operation of the Holy Spirit a work of the devil. They were convinced in their hearts that it was a divine work, but since the Savior had rebuked them for their hypocrisy and mien of sanctimoniousness they conceived a deadly hatred against Christ, and that incited them to blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

Accordingly we have here this explanation offered us: To declare a *work* of the Holy Ghost a work of the devil when one is convinced that it is a work of the Holy Ghost, that is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This shows us what a serious matter this is. There are no Christians that do not occasionally resist the operations of divine grace and then try to persuade themselves that they were only chasing away gloomy thoughts. Does that mean anything else than that such thoughts are of the devil? The doctrine now before us warns us that, if we wish to be saved, we must yield promptly to the operation of the Holy Spirit as soon as we feel it and not resist it. For in the next stage the person who resists may find himself saying: "This operation is not by the Holy Spirit." The following stage will be that he begins to hate the way by which God wants to lead him to salvation, and ultimately he will blaspheme that way. Accordingly, let us be on our guard. Let us open the door to the Holy Spirit whenever He knocks and not take the view of worldly men, who regard these sensations as a symptom of melancholia.

This is not a jesting matter; for unless the Holy Spirit brings us to faith, we shall never attain it. Whoever rejects the Holy Spirit is beyond help, even by God. God wants the order maintained which He has ordained for our salvation. He brings no one into heaven by force. On the occasion to which our text refers Christ had just healed the man with the withered hand and had driven out a devil. Everybody saw that the power of God was making an inroad into the kingdom of Satan. But the reprobates who stood by said: "Ah! Beelzebub is in this Jesus; that is why He can cast out inferior devils." The very action which they had witnessed, the works and the words of Christ, showed that He was arrayed against the devil and was destroying the devil's kingdom. It was wholly out of reason to imagine that the devil would help Christ in that work.

Luke 12, 10: *Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.* Again we see that it is essential to the sin against the Holy Ghost that the blasphemy is *uttered,* and that, *knowingly and purposely.*

We have a very important statement regarding this sin in Heb. 6, 4—8: *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost and have tasted the good Word of God*

and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame. For the earth that drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. It is a characteristic of the sin against the Holy Ghost that *the person who has committed it cannot be restored to repentance.* That is simply impossible. It is not God who puts man into this condition, but the sinner by his own fault produces this state of irretrievable impenitence. When this condition has reached a certain degree, God ceases to operate on the person. The curse has settled upon him, and there is no further possibility for the person to be saved. Why? Because he cannot be induced to repent. The soil of his heart has been finally blasted and is no longer fructified by the dew and rain of divine grace.

1 John 5, 16: *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.* THERE IS A SIN UNTO DEATH: I DO NOT SAY THAT HE SHALL PRAY FOR IT. This passage contains important information for us, but we cannot act upon it. For we can say of no person before his death that he has committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. Even when his mouth utters blasphemies, we do not know to what extent his heart is implicated, or whether the phenomenon is not perhaps an operation of the devil, or whether he is acting in great blindness, and whether he may not be renewed unto repentance. The Christians in the days of the apostles had the gift to discern the spirits. Accordingly, St. John here means to say: "When you see that God has ceased to be gracious to such or such an individual who has committed this sin, you are not to wish either that God should be gracious to him, and you are to cease praying for him." Neither may we say to God: "Save those who have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost."

This is a shocking statement, and yet it contains a great comfort. Some one may come to you and say: "I am a wretched man — I have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. I am quite certain of it." The afflicted may tell you of the evil he has done, the evil he has *spoken,* and the evil he has thought. It may really look as if he had blasphemed the Holy Ghost. Now remember the weapon which Heb. 6 furnishes for attacking a case like

this: That person is not at all rejoicing over what he tells you; it is all so awfully horrid to him. This shows that God has at least begun to lead him to repentance; all that he need do is to lay hold of the promise of the Gospel. When you ask him whether he has been doing all those evil things intentionally, he may affirm that involuntarily because Satan makes him affirm the question. When you ask him whether he wishes he had not done those evil things, he will answer: "Yes, indeed; these things are causing me the most awful worry." That is a sure sign that God has begun the work of repentance in that person. A case like this is indeed not to be treated lightly; the sufferer must be shown that, since there is in him the beginning of repentance, he has an indubitable proof that he has not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. In general, when preaching on this subject, the minister must aim at convincing his hearers that they have not committed this sin rather than warn them not to commit it. To a person who has really committed this sin preaching is of no benefit. Whoever is sorry for his sins and craves forgiveness should be told that he is a dear child of God, but is passing through a terrible tribulation.

Acts 7, 51 we read that Stephen said to his hearers: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, *ye do always resist the Holy Ghost;* as your fathers did, so do ye." Had these people committed the sin against the Holy Ghost? No; for Stephen died praying for them: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." V. 60. This shows that, although the Jews had committed wilful sins, they had not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost; otherwise the martyr would not have prayed for them. He was, when praying for them, thinking that an hour might come when they would no longer resist the Holy Ghost.

Let us now hear *Luther's* comment on 1 John 5, 16. He writes (St. Louis Ed. IX, 1519): "By the term 'sin unto death' I understand heresy which these people set up in the place of the truth. If they do not repent after the first and second admonition (Titus 3, 10), their sin is a sin unto death. However, we may number with this class such as sin from stubbornness and in defiance, like Judas, who had been given ample warning, but because of his obstinate wickedness was beyond help; also Saul, who died in his sins because he would not trust in the Lord. But the highest degree of obstinacy is found in those who insist on maintaining and defending their known error."

The sin is not unpardonable because of its magnitude, — for the apostle, as we heard, has distinctly declared: "Where sin

abounded, grace did much more abound," — but because the person committing this sin rejects the only means by which he can be brought to repentance, faith, and steadfastness in faith. Luther here refers to men whose sin consists in this, that they obstinately defend against their better knowledge and conscience an error which they have recognized as such.

Luther continues: "Of this kind is also the sin against the Holy Ghost, or hardening in wickedness, fighting against the known truth, and final impenitence."

It is undoubtedly incorrect to regard impenitence unto the end as the sin against the Holy Ghost, as Luther does; for in that case most men would have committed this sin. However, final impenitence is a feature of this sin. The special peculiarity of this sin is that it opposes the *office,* the operation, of the Holy Ghost.

To return to Luther: "There is another kind of sin which is not unto death. Of this kind was the sin of Paul, to which he refers in 1 Tim. 1, 13, saying: 'I was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.'" Paul had committed the awful sin of blaspheming and trying to force Christians to blaspheme; but he was acting in appalling blindness: he had no inkling that he was fighting against God. "Of this sin Christ speaks in Matt. 12, 32, saying: 'Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him.' Likewise, the sin of the men who crucified Christ was not unto death, for Peter says to them: 'And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it.' Acts 3, 17. And Paul says: 'Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.' 1 Cor. 2, 8. However, this sin is unto death when it is defended after having been sufficiently revealed and recognized as a sin, because it resists the grace of God, the means of grace, and the forgiveness of sin. Where there is no knowledge of sin, there is no forgiveness. For the forgiveness of sin is preached to those who feel their sin and are seeking the grace of God. *But these persons* [who have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost] *are not frightened by any scruples of conscience,* nor do they recognize and feel their sin."

Let every one beware of resisting the Holy Ghost. When a sin has been revealed to him and his own heart affirms that it is a sin, let not his mouth deny the fact. That may not yet be the sin against the Holy Ghost, but it may be a step in that direction. There are many people who admit that we all sin in many ways

every day, but when they are reproved, they claim that they never harmed a child.

As regards people who are distressed because they think they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, they would not feel distressed if they really had committed that sin and were in that awful condition of heart, but they would find their constant delight in blaspheming the Gospel. However, Christians in distress still have faith, and the Spirit of God is working in them; and if the Spirit of God is working in them, they have not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost.

An excellent exposition of this matter is found in *Baier's* Latin *Compend of Positive Theology*. He says in Part II, chap. III, § 24: "The most grievous of all actual sins, which is called the sin against the Holy Ghost,[a)] consists[b)] in a malicious renunciation[d)] and blasphemous[e)] and obstinate[f)] assaults upon the heavenly truth which had once upon a time been known[c)] by the person committing this sin.

"a) The manner of denominating this sin thus is derived from its object, which is the Holy Ghost. The term 'Holy Ghost' in this place is understood *metonymically;* it stands for the office which the Holy Ghost discharges in converting the souls of men by the ministry of the Word. This meaning of the term is also found in 2 Cor. 3, 6. The sin against the Holy Ghost, then, is a sin which is committed *against the office and ministry of the Holy Ghost and against the heavenly truth which is revealed by that office and ministry.* [To blaspheme the Holy Ghost means to blaspheme His ministry, to declare the operations of the Holy Ghost operations of the devil, and to offer resistance to His office.] It is also called a sin unto death, this denomination being derived from the effect of this sin, because it leads quite definitely to eternal death, or damnation. 1 John 5, 16. ["Sin unto death" must not be confounded with "mortal sin."]

"b) The seat of doctrine for this sin is found in Matt. 12, 30 ff.; Mark 3, 28; Luke 12, 10.

"c) The doctrine of heavenly truth may either have been approved once upon a time with an assent of divine faith and by public profession, or it may have only been perceived so clearly that the heart of the individual was convinced and had no argument to set up against it. In the former manner the sin against the Holy Ghost is committed by those apostles who renounce and vilify the truth which they had once known and believed, such as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes in chap. 6, 4 ff. In the latter class belong the Pharisees and scribes, who never approved the doctrine of Christ by their profession, although they were convinced of its truth in their heart by Scripture and the miracles of Christ, and had nothing but calumnies to set up against it. [There are Lutheran theologians who claim that only a truly regenerate person can commit the sin against the Holy Ghost. But that is going too far; for nobody will believe the Pharisees to whom the Lord speaks of this sin had been truly converted at some previous time; they had simply grown up in their wickedness. It is true, however, that a person can commit this sin even after his regeneration, a fact that is to be maintained over against the Calvinists. It is quite probable that Judas had been a believer. One can scarcely believe that the Savior would have called him while he was under the wrath of God. Judas

fell away later, and Satan took possession not only of his body, but also of his mind.]

"d) In other words, the renunciation of, and assaults upon, the heavenly doctrine must be made ἑκουσίως, 'wilfully,' Heb. 10, 26, in such a manner that the source of this renunciation and assault is pure, downright malice. However, those who renounce their faith from ignorance or fear of death are not on that account sinners against the Holy Ghost, but can obtain remission of their sin. See the examples of Paul in 1 Tim. 1, 13, and of Peter in Matt. 26, 70 ff. [When the Word of God has been clearly and plainly presented to a person and it is evident that he has been impressed by it, because he is abashed, he begins to tremble, and feels that God is approaching him, it is a shocking thing in such a case to hear the person saying: "No, I do not believe that! I do not believe that! You misinterpret Scripture!"] That may not be the sin against the Holy Ghost, but it is a step in that direction. I say, a step in that direction; for the person may reconsider his act and be saved. Peter had taken three steps towards the sin against the Holy Ghost; however, he acted not from hatred against Christ, but from fear. He expected to be put in prison if he were to admit that he was a disciple of Jesus. That fear of Peter gave the devil an opportunity to overthrow this great and solid pillar of the Church. But the Holy Spirit reentered the heart of Peter, and Peter repented of his sin.

"e) In the passages cited under b) this sin is called 'speaking a word against the Holy Ghost,' or 'blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.' Accordingly, the form which this sin takes is a reviling talk that is aimed against the office of the Holy Spirit, for instance, when His teaching and the wonderful works that were performed in support of it are ascribed to the power and operation of Satan, as was done by the Pharisees.

"f) Accordingly, it is in its very nature a sin of such a character that it cannot be forgiven, and never is forgiven to any one, according to the passages in Matthew and Mark, because by its very nature it blocks the way to repentance. The reason, however, why final impenitence is so closely connected with this sin is that the men who commit it directly and with full malice oppose the means for their conversion and that God therefore withdraws His grace from them and gives them over to a reprobate mind."

A person who has committed the sin against the Holy Ghost is condemned not so much on account of this sin as rather on account of his unbelief. Unbelief is the general cause (*causa communis*) and malicious and constant vilification of the truth the particular cause (*causa singularis*), of his damnation. It is not due to an absolute decree of reprobation, as the Calvinists teach, who maintain the really diabolical error that such men cannot be saved for the reason that Christ did not suffer and atone for their sins and did not redeem them.

There is a current opinion that a certain Spiera had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. He had come to know the evangelical truth, but renounced it twice, the second time under oath. He got into an awful condition of mind: everybody could see that he was suffering the torments of hell. All attempts to comfort him failed. Paul Vergerius attended him in his illness and ministered the consolation of the Gospel to him. However, all our theologians hold that Spiera did not commit the sin against the Holy Ghost

because he condemned that sin and was fully convinced that he had merited eternal perdition. His sin was despair of the mercy of God. Moreover, the reason why Spiera renounced the truth was that he feared he would be burned by the Romanists.

Quenstedt's account of Spiera is cited in Baier's *Compend*, Part II, p. 328.

The case of Spiera is an important, solemn warning for all time. It furnished Vergerius the final impulse for quitting the Papacy when he beheld the infernal agony which a person had to suffer who had renounced the evangelical truth.

THIRTY-NINTH EVENING LECTURE.

(November 6, 1885.)

There is not a profession or calling, my friends, that has been made the subject of as profound contempt and intensive hatred as that of theologians, or teachers of religion. The world regards these men as the chief, if not the only, cause that delays the coming of the Golden Age. A hundred years ago Diderot, the notorious French encyclopedist, wrote: "Better times will not come for the world until the last king shall have been hanged with the guts of the last priest." On account of this and similar statements the French government ordered that the writings of Diderot be burned and the author put in prison; however, his appalling statement became not only the slogan of the French revolutionaries in 1789, but it has been the slogan also of all revolutionaries until the present time. We may expect, too, that it will be translated into action some day, for all signs point in that direction. You may live to see it realized.

If only theologians and teachers of religion would not make themselves so contemptible and hated by their own fault! Alas! this sad fact is recorded not only in the annals of the history of the Church, but it is also confirmed by our own experience. There are too many teachers of religion who misuse their sacred office, their sacred profession and calling, for the gratification of their worldly minds, their greed of money and glory, and their love of domineering. They do not only hush and even deny the truth continually, partly from a miserable fear of men, partly from an abominable favor of men, but instead of preaching the pure Gospel, they proclaim the very opposite and spread lies and errors. Why, there

is no vice too shameful, no crime too awful, but teachers of religion have desecrated their office with it and have given the world offense, grievous beyond utterance.

Is this fact to deter you, my friends, from continuing your devotion to the study of theology? God forbid! Consider, in the first place, that the omniscient God has foreseen these sad events and has nevertheless in His infinite wisdom adopted this order of administering the sacred office, not through holy angels, who did not fall from their holy estate, but through fallen men, who are subject to sin. May God keep us from taking offense at this arrangement! Let us rather adore God for having made admirable provision that His Church shall not be overcome by hell, spite of the fact that it is served by such poor and, at times, such abominable ministers.

Consider, in the second place, that notwithstanding the contempt of the world the great God has highly honored the office of teachers of religion and has exalted it above every other office. To begin with, the Son of God, in the days of His flesh and while personally administering this office, from the very beginning cheered the first teachers with these words: "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me." Luke 10, 16. What glorious credentials has He furnished His ministers by these words for their itineraries throughout the world! Furthermore, the Word of God has revealed to us the fact that not only marriage unions, but also unions between ministers and their congregations are concluded in heaven. What is told us concerning Jeremiah and Paul applies to all true ministers: they are appointed not only in the present time, not only at their birth, but they have been appointed by God from eternity, to be His helpers for saving those who are entrusted to them. Lastly, no one has been given more glorious promises than teachers of the Gospel and ministers of the Word of God. By the prophet Daniel, God says: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." Dan. 12, 3. When the time comes that the worldly shall gnash their teeth, they shall witness all the elect and angels saying to God: "This man has been a faithful minister and teacher. He has proclaimed the saving Word of God to a world of castaways. On yonder earth he was despised, persecuted, and maligned, but he shines now as a star with imperishable luster."

Verily, my dear friends, this fact should cheer us and keep us from becoming unfaithful to our God, who has called us into this office. Of course, what the prophet has said applies only to true and faithful ministers. Bearing this in mind, let us take up the final thesis in this series, which treats of the distinction between the Law and the Gospel and of the confounding of these two doctrines. In studying this thesis, we shall ponder the chief and primary requisite of a true teacher of the Christian religion.

Thesis XXV.

In the twenty-first place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the person teaching it does not allow the Gospel to have a general predominance in his teaching.

It is an exceedingly important subject that we are taking up in this our concluding study. For we are told in this thesis that Law and Gospel are confounded and perverted for the hearers of the Word, not only when the Law predominates in the preaching, but also when Law and Gospel, as a rule, are equally balanced and the Gospel is not predominant in the preaching. In view of the precious character of this subject I am seized with fear lest I spoil it by my manner of presentation. The longer I have meditated this subject, the more inadequate does the expression seem that I can give it; so precious is this matter.

Let us turn to the Holy Scriptures and become convinced that, in a general way, the Gospel must predominate in the preaching of a Christian minister. The first proof for this claim is furnished by the first preacher after Christ had been born into this world. He was an angel; he preached to the shepherds, who were terrified by his celestial splendor: "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Luke 2, 10. In his address there is not the least trace of the Law, of injunctions, of demands that God makes upon men, but He preaches the very opposite: concerning the good will and mercy of God to all men. He is joined by the heavenly host, who sing exultingly: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2, 14. Again, we hear nothing but a sweet, pleasant message of joy. Our Father in heaven has had His honor restored to Him. He had created a race of men of whom He knew that they would fall, but He did everything possible to save men. The Infant born in the stable at Bethlehem has established peace between God and mankind. The only thing that God requires is that men be pleased

with His arrangement for their salvation and take comfort and rejoice in this Infant.

This heavenly preacher gave us an illustration of how we are to preach. True, we have to preach the Law, only, however, as a preparation for the Gospel. The ultimate aim in our preaching of the Law must be to preach the Gospel. Whoever does not adopt this aim is not a true minister of the Gospel.

Mark 16, 15. 16 we read: *Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* When these words were spoken, the time had arrived for Christ to proclaim in clear and distinct terms the basic facts of His religion. For He was about to ascend to heaven and must now give His apostles instruction how to continue His work. What does He say to them? He tells them to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. The mere term *Gospel* serves notice on them that their message must be a message of joy. Lest they think that this word is so infinitely great that nobody will grasp its meaning, He adds these words immediately: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," to let them know that this is what He understands by the word *Gospel*. He proceeds: "He that believeth not shall be damned." This, too, is a sweet word; for He does not say: "He that has sinned much for a long time shall be damned," but states no other reason for man's damnation than his unbelief. Humanly speaking, one might say that these last words are the very sweetest and most comforting. Ponder the meaning of this statement: "He that believeth not shall be damned." No matter what a person's character is and how grievously he has sinned, nothing in his past record shall damn him. But, naturally, when a person refuses to believe the words, the message, of Jesus, he has to go to perdition. The Lord never makes mention of hell except for the purpose of bringing men to heaven. So in this passage; the alarming reference to damnation is merely to prompt men to accept His gracious message and not to put it from them. These last words of the Lord should not be emphasized thus: "He that believeth *not* shall be damned," but thus: "He that *believeth* not shall be damned." He means to say: "Your damnation has already been removed from you; your sin has been taken away; hell has already been overcome for you. I have rendered a sufficient atonement for everything. It is now for you to *believe* this, and you will be saved forevermore."

2 Tim. 4, 5 Paul writes: *But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist* (ἔργον εὐαγγελιστοῦ), *make*

full proof of thy ministry. Granted that the term "evangelist" may refer to a special office, that does not weaken our argument. Those who were not apostles, but evangelists were such because they were to preach nothing but the Gospel, that is, only the doctrine by which they were to save men.

True, if you meet with people who are merged in self-righteousness, in sins and vices, and in carnal security, you must first crush their stony hearts; but that is merely preparatory work. The waters of grace cannot penetrate a stony heart. But the Law is merely an auxiliary doctrine; it is not the real doctrine of Christ. "The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1, 17. By Christ came only grace, the Gospel, not a new Law, as the miserable papists claim in their blindness. He preached the Law merely to prepare men for the sweet comfort which He had to offer them.

2 Cor. 3, 5. 6 Paul writes: *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.* The apostle speaks of his apostolic activity. Preachers of this Christian era must bear in mind that they are preachers, not of the Old Covenant, but of the New. That is the reason why the apostle refers to the letter, that is, the Law, which kills, and to the spirit, that is, the Gospel, which gives life. A New Testament preacher as such has to preach nothing else than the Gospel. He is really discharging an alien function when he preaches the Law. It is due to their horrible blindness that papists assert that in the Scriptures two doctrines must be distinguished, the old Law and the *evangelical law.* The latter term is self-contradiction. How can there be glad tidings in a law? Add to this that the Antichrist goes so far as to contend that the evangelical law is the more grievous of the two; for the Mosaic Law had been satisfied with external obedience, while the evangelical law lays its injunctions on men's innermost heart.

1 Cor. 2, 2 Paul writes: *For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.* It is remarkable that during his sojourn at Corinth, Paul was day and night wrestling with the problem how to bring Christ into people's heart and how to lay a solid foundation for their faith in Christ and their joy in Him. Jesus Christ was the marrow and substance of all his preaching, the golden thread that ran through all his sermons. He wrote this fact down for our benefit. When saying farewell

to our congregations, we can do so with a good conscience only if we can repeat the statement of Paul that has just been cited. Woe to the preacher that preaches other things! Woe to him if, in order to make men godly, he has preached the Law because he imagined that the pure, unadulterated grace of God would not save men! If he has done that, he has been an unfaithful servant.

1 Cor. 15, 3 Paul writes: *For I delivered unto you* FIRST OF ALL *that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.* The apostle says: "first of all," *ἐν πρώτοις, imprimis.* He regarded all other matters as subordinate to his primary subject for preaching, namely, the Gospel concerning Christ.

Now, do not merely listen to this statement of the apostle, but think of the time when you will be the pastor of a congregation and make a vow to God that you will adopt the apostle's method, that you will not stand in your pulpits sad-faced, as if you were bidding men to come to a funeral, but like men that go wooing a bride or announcing a wedding. If you do not mingle Law with the Gospel you will always mount your pulpit with joy. People will notice that you are filled with joy because you are bringing the blessed message of joy to your congregation. They will furthermore notice that wonderful things are happening among them. Alas! many ministers do not meet with these wonderful experiences; their hearers remain sleepy; their misers stay stingy. What is the reason? Not sufficient Gospel has been preached to them. The people who go to church in America really want to hear the Word of God. We are living in a free country, where it is nobody's concern whether one goes to church or not. In accordance with God's will it should be the preacher's aim to proclaim the Gospel to his hearers till their hearts are melted, till they give up their resistance and confess that the Lord has been too strong for them, and henceforth they wish to abide with Jesus. It is not sufficient for you to be conscious of your orthodoxy and your ability to present the pure doctrine correctly. These are, indeed, important matters; however, no one will be benefited by them if you confound Law and Gospel. The very finest form of confounding both occurs when the Gospel is preached *along with* the Law, but is not the predominating element in the sermon. The preacher may think that he has proclaimed the evangelical truth quite often. His hearers, however, remember only that on some occasions he preached quite comfortingly and told them to believe in Jesus Christ. Without telling them how to attain to faith in Christ, your hearers will be spiritually starved to

death if you do not allow the Gospel to predominate in your preaching. They will be spiritually underfed because the bread of life is not the Law, but the Gospel.

2 Cor. 1, 24 we read: *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith ye stand.* This is a fine text for your initial sermon. Remember this word of the apostle well: when you become ministers, you become helpers of the Christians' joy. Do not become ministers who vex and torture the people, filling them with uncertainty and causing them to go home from church heavy-hearted. Write your sermons so that you can say: "If any one hears this sermon and is not converted, it is his own fault if he goes home from church unconverted and hardened." Do not worry when you hear fanatics say that you are not truly converted, otherwise you would come down on your people with the Law much more forcefully and that you are preaching your people into hell, etc. Let fanatics say about you what they please. You may rest assured that your method is the correct one because you are to be helpers of joy to Christians; you are not to put them on the rack of the Law. The longer you preach to your people after this method, the more they will praise God for having given them such a pastor. *You may believe me when I say that in the entire course of the history of the Church there will be found few communions that have such achievements to show as our Synod spite of its weaknesses and defects. That is not due to our prudence, our hard work, our self-denial. The true reason is that we have really preached the genuine Gospel to the people.*

As soon as there arises in the hearts of hearers a desire for God's grace and mercy and the cheerful assurance that they, too, will be saved, they are believers. Many remain in their sins because they think that they will never get to be so that they can go to heaven, since they can never become as godly as their godly pastor is. Do not hesitate to preach the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus frankly and cheerfully, and such gloomy thoughts will soon vanish from the hearts of your hearers.

Let me offer you two quotations from the Symbolical Books which show that our Church, too, has in its confessional writings declared that the doctrine of the grace of God in Christ Jesus is a matter of primary importance. In the *Augsburg Confession,* Art. IV, we read (Mueller, p. 39; *Trigl. Conc.,* p. 45): "Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that

their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who by His death has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4."

In the *Smalcald Articles,* Part II, Art. I, we read (Mueller, p. 300, *Trigl. Conc.,* p. 461): "Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered, even though heaven and earth, and whatever will not abide, should sink into ruin. For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, says Peter. Acts 4, 12. And with His stripes we are healed. Is. 53, 5. And upon this article all things depend which we teach and practise in opposition to the Pope, the devil, and the world. Therefore we must be sure concerning this doctrine and not doubt; for otherwise all is lost, and the Pope and the devil and all things gain the victory and suit over us."

Let me offer you a quotation from *Luther* which you ought to commit to memory and of which you should make diligent use. It is found in his *Preface to the Epistle to the Galatians* (St. L. Ed. IX, 9) and reads: "In my heart there reigns, and shall ever reign, this one article, namely, faith in my dear Lord Christ, which is the sole beginning, middle, and end of all spiritual and godly thoughts which I may have at any time, day or night."

Luther might as well have said "in my sermons and writings," instead of "in my heart," for his sermons and writings conform to the above rule. No one can preach the Gospel more sweetly and gloriously than our beloved Luther did. He does not only offer great comfort in his sermons, but he preaches so as to lay hold of any doubting hearer and drag him out of his doubts, compelling him to believe that he is a child of God and would die saved if he were to die that night. Would to God that this testimony could be offered concerning you when you have entered the ministry! Pray to God on your knees for His help in order that you may repeat Luther's confession. Would to God that this confession could be repeated by all ministers, and I must add, alas! also by all ministers in the Missouri Synod! For they are not all alike; in some there is a legalistic trend, which does great injury to their own and to their hearers' souls. They do not administer their office with genuine cheerfulness and do not make their people cheerful Christians. But that is what you will have to do to achieve wonderful results. If you preach the Gospel abundantly, you need not fear that your people will leave your church when some spiritual mountebank comes along and starts an unseemly exhibition in his pulpit. Your people will say: "Our minister has given us what we

could not get anywhere else. He is a true Lutheran minister and pours out a great treasure for us every Sunday."

Commenting on John 17, 10, *Luther* writes (St. L. Ed. VIII, 798): "Let every one, then, see for himself how Christ is glorified in him. For there are many who boast of the Gospel and know how to talk a great deal about it; but having Christ glorified in oneself is not such a common event that it takes place in everybody. For, as we were told, glorifying Christ, or believing in Him, is nothing else than being assured that whosoever has Him has the Father and all grace, divine blessings, and life eternal. That is something which the saints of this world, the Pope and the sectarian spirits, cannot achieve. For, although some talk about Christ and manage to utter these words that He is the Son of God, that He has redeemed us, etc., yet they never learn by their own experience how He is received, used, sought, found, and held fast and how the Father is apprehended in and through Him. Meanwhile they are soaring up into the clouds and busy themselves with their own imaginations. You can observe this in some of the sectarian spirits, who have learned from us to speak of Christ and of faith, *how rarely they treat this doctrine, yea, how cold and inept they are* whenever they have to treat *this chief point of doctrine,* and how they rush over such texts as these and merely skim their surface, regarding this matter as a paltry thing that everybody is able to do quite well."

On examining your sermon for both its Law and its Gospel contents, you may find that you have given the Gospel very little space. Now remember, if you come out of your pulpit without having preached enough Gospel to save some poor sinner who may have come to church for the first and the last time, his blood will be required of you.

Luther continues: "To sum up, they are filled altogether with other thoughts, and even when they hit upon something worth while, as will happen occasionally, they have no real understanding of it and promptly skip on to their dreams. *A true minister, however, urges this article most of all, yea, without ceasing,* since on it is based everything that pertains to the knowledge of God and our salvation, as you see in this evangelist John and throughout the epistles of Paul."

It is of paramount importance that your heart be full of this subject and that you speak of it from personal experience, so that, when you reach this point in your sermons, you are forced to confess to your hearers that you cannot fully express all that you have

experienced, that it baffles all efforts to describe it in words, and that you can merely stammer forth a few inadequate words about it. A preacher of this sort will soon notice that streams of the Holy Spirit are being poured out upon his congregation and that even the most hardened sinners are for once brought around to Christ by the comforting preaching which they have heard. We must not imagine that saving knowledge is produced in the hearers invariably by powerful preaching of the Law. Many hearers of such preaching become convinced that they would perish if they had to die immediately. When they hear a real Gospel sermon, full of the richest consolation, it may readily happen that they are brought around to Christ.

In *Luther's House Postil* (St. L. Ed. XIII, p. 2014) we find this comment on Ps. 68, 18: "What a King is this who has ascended on high, sat down beyond the clouds, at the right hand of Majesty in heaven, and has led captivity captive! While on earth, He was not engaged in child's play and worthless things, but captured an everlasting enemy and a great prison: He made captives of sin and the devil, who had made captives of the entire world. Hence sin and the devil, though they are my adversaries and want to torment me, yet cannot harm me in the least if I hold fast Christ." How foolish are ministers who, after preaching a long time without having any success, decide to preach nothing but the Law for a while in order to rouse their people from their spiritual sleep! By that method they will accomplish nothing. "This does not mean that the people are to remain lazy and not do good works, as the papists say when they revile our preaching and sarcastically call us 'sweet preachers.' " Luther is willing to bear the reproach of being called a "sweet," that is, a comforting, preacher. He will regard that as a very trifling charge when people say that his preaching prevents men from doing good works, because he is sure that by his preaching he is changing men's hearts, so that they will do good works. "However, they would talk in a different strain if they had ever been in this prison. When they shall be placed at the left hand of the Judge and anguish and terror lay hold on them, they shall experience what this prison means. Accordingly, this is not a subject that may be preached to men's flesh and blood, as if they were given liberty to do according to their lust. But the story of Christ's ascension and His rule is to the end that sin may be made captive and eternal death may not shackle us and keep us in bondage. Now, if sin is to be made captive, I, who believe in Christ, must so live that I am not overcome by hatred and envy of my fellow-

men or by other sins, but must fight against sin and say: Listen, sin! You want to incite me to become angry, to envy, to commit adultery, to steal, to be unfaithful, etc. I will not do it. Likewise, if sin wants to assail me from the other side and fill me with terror, I must say: No, sin; you are my servant, and I am your lord. Have you never heard the pretty song about my Lord Jesus Christ which David sang, saying: 'Thou hast ascended on high,' etc.? Hitherto you have been a hangman and a devil to me; you have held me captive; but now that I believe in Christ you shall be my hangman no longer. I shall not permit you to accuse me, for you are a captive of my Lord and King, who has put you in the stocks and cast you beneath my feet. Understand this matter right: By His ascension and by the preaching of faith, Christ does not purpose to rear lazy and sluggish Christians, who say: We shall now live according to our pleasure, not doing good works, remaining sinners, and following sin like captive slaves. *Those who talk thus have never had a right understanding of the preaching of faith.* Christ and His mercy are not preached to the end that men should remain in their sins. On the contrary, this is what the Christian doctrine proclaims: The captivity is to leave you go free, not that you may do whatever you desire, but that you sin no more."

Luther means to tell us to preach the real Gospel with its comfort without hesitation and not to fear that we shall preach people into hell with the Gospel. True, some may derive a carnal comfort from our Gospel-preaching, but we must not think that they will have an easy death with their false comfort. In the presence of death their comfort will vanish like snow before the sun in March. We are not responsible for false comfort which a hearer draws from our preaching. He lives in security and imagines that, since he is not so awfully wicked and has many good traits to show and his getting drunk occasionally and his cursing are merely bad habits that still cling to him, he will undoubtedly go to heaven. Such a person never has received the Gospel that was preached to him in his heart. We must not allow occurrences of this kind to disturb us. We must cheerfully preach the Gospel, since Christ has commanded us: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Oftentimes all hope seems to vanish from those who have lived in a false comfort and imagined that they were resting their confidence on what their faithful minister had preached. The minister may have an awful time with such people when preparing them for their departure from this world; they seem to despair of salvation. *God grant that some day people may say*

about you that you are preaching well, but too sweetly! Do not hold forth with the Law too long; let the Gospel follow promptly. When the Law has made the iron to glow, apply the Gospel immediately to shape it into a proper form; if the iron is allowed to cool, nothing can be done with it.

Lastly, *Luther* writes in his House Postil (St. L. Ed. XIII, 800 ff.): "This, then, is the other rule laid down by the Lord: we are to disregard specious displays and look for fruits. He says: 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' He illustrates His meaning by a parable. No one is so foolish as to go into a field full of thorns and thistles and look for grapes and figs. Such fruits we seek on a different plant, which is not so full of barbs and prickles. The same thing happens in our gardens. Seeing a tree full of apples or pears, everybody exclaims: Ah, what a fine tree that is! Again, where there is no fruit on a tree or the fruit is worm-eaten, cracked, and misshapen, everybody says the tree is worthless, fit to be cut down and cast into the fire, so that a better tree may be planted in its place. These tests, the Lord says, you must apply to the false prophets, and you will not make a mistake, no matter how good their appearance may be. If a wolf had put on twenty sheepskins, still you must know him to be a wolf and not be deceived by him.

"Now, what is the fruit of a true prophet or preacher by which we can know that he is not a wolf, but a good sheep? It is not his way of living, his title, and office, nor his peculiar gifts of grace. For our Lord testifies, and our own experience corroborates His testimony, that people are often duped and deluded by these external marks. The genuine fruit — as the Lord states at the end of His parable — is the doing of the will of the Father in heaven.

"Note that the Lord in this place is not speaking of Christians in general, but of prophets. True, all Christians are to do the will of the Father and are to be saved through doing it." We are frequently misunderstood. People imagine they can know a true prophet by the fruit of his godly life and by his great success in the ministry. But Christ says: "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." Matt. 7, 21. "Now, 'doing the will of the Father' refers not only to that will which is expressed in the Ten Commandments and to the obedience which God demands in His Law. For, since we cannot do this will of God perfectly in the present life, it would be impossible for us to glory in having done the will of the Father, and hence we could not go to heaven. But the will of the Father has been expressed in

John 6, 40, where Christ says: 'This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the Last Day!' That is the only way in which we all, both preachers and hearers, are to walk if we are to be saved.

"Now, the Lord in this passage speaks, in particular, of preachers or prophets, whose real and proper fruit is nothing else than this, that they diligently proclaim this will of God to the people and teach them that God is gracious and merciful and has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but wants him to live, moreover, that God has manifested His mercy by having His only-begotten Son become man. Whoever, now, receives Him and believes in Him, that is, whoever takes comfort in the fact that for the sake of His Son, God will be merciful to him, will forgive his sins, and grant him eternal salvation, etc., — *whoever is engaged in this preaching of the pure Gospel and thus directs men to Christ, the only Mediator between God and men, he, as a preacher, is doing the will of God.* That is the genuine fruit by which no one is deceived or duped. For if it were possible that the devil were to preach this truth, the preaching would not be false or made up of lies and a person believing it would have what it promises. — *After* this fruit, which is *the principal and most reliable one* and cannot deceive, there follow in the course of time other fruits, namely, a life in beautiful harmony with this doctrine and in no way contrary to it. But these fruits are *to be regarded as genuine fruits only where* the *first* fruit, namely, *the doctrine of Christ,* already exists."

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